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ABSTRACT

A study examined British employers' views of the links between education and business. Data were collected from the following sources: mail survey of a random sample of 1,796 employers drawn from the Dunn and Bradstreet database (response rate, 47.1%); follow-up interviews (43 face-to-face and 38 telephone interviews); and review of national and local studies of employer-education interaction. Although 84.6% of the employers surveyed advocated links between employers and education, such links were a minor rather than major priority for many employers. It was estimated that one-third of British employers (generally large employers) are involved in formal links with education, such as work experience, career events, and school visits. Most employers had adopted an ad hoc approach to education, with participation depending either on educators taking the initiative or chance contacts. Although most employers were aware of Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) and other agencies devoted to increasing school-business interaction, only one in four had links with EBPs. Lack of time, perceived lack of value, and/or lack of awareness were the main reasons many employers did not get involved in education-business links. (Twenty-four tables/figures are included. Appended are information about the survey response rate, questionnaire, and list of related publications.) (MN)

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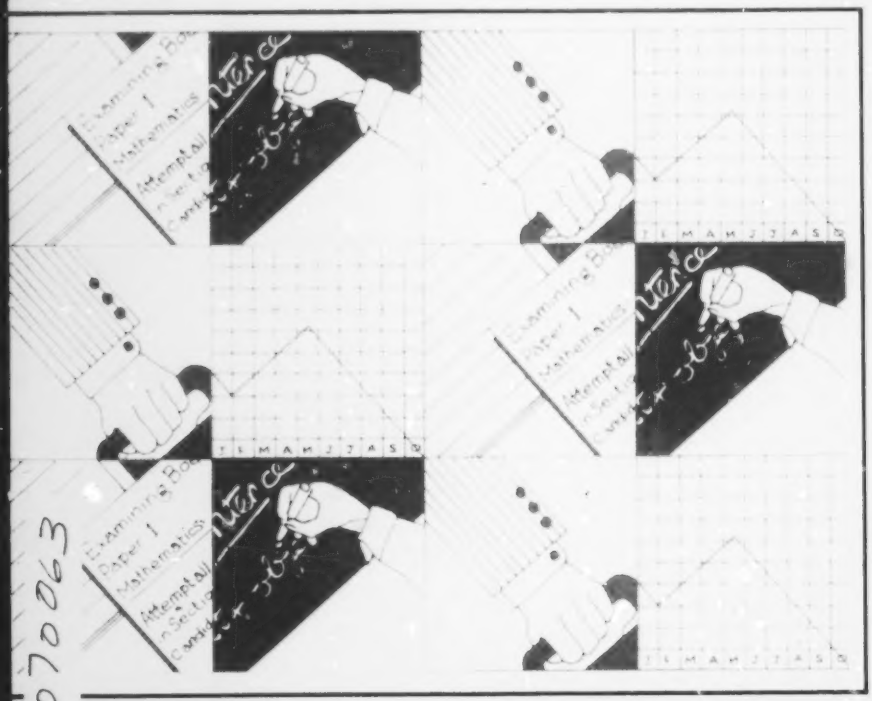

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The Institute for Employment Studies

The Institute for Employment Studies is an independent, international centre of research and consultancy in human resource issues. It has close working contacts with employers in the manufacturing, service and public sectors, government departments, agencies, professional and employee bodies, and foundations. Since it was established 25 years ago the Institute has been a focus of knowledge and practical experience in employment and training policy, the operation of labour markets and human resource planning and development. IES is a not-for-profit organisation which has a multidisciplinary staff of over 50. IES expertise is available to all organisations through research, consultancy, training and publications.

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1. Introduction

A close partnership between education and business is seen as an important element of government policy to improve the nation's competitiveness. The public policy interest in the area was recently underlined by the Secretary of State for Education who argued that:

> *'We, in government, regard close links between education and business as a vital ingredient of our future economic success. . . . No business is too big or too small to be involved in education business links.'*[1]

Indeed, many employers have some form of connection with educational institutions. According to the Skill Needs in Britain surveys[2], around three in four employers have built up links with a number of different organisations in order to meet their longer-term skill needs. In the surveys, around half had links with schools and over 40 per cent had set up contacts with further education colleges.

The links vary in their intensity and purpose. At one extreme, an employer may attend the occasional careers evening or have an employee who is a school governor. At the other, some major employers have taken a strategic decision to involve themselves in many aspects of educational life. This had led some, such as Rover, Massey Ferguson and the Construction Industry Training Board, to develop and resource Partnership Centres which provide a work-based context for pupils to engage in curriculum-related activities. In between, many employers are involved in a variety of links with education, including providing work experience or teacher placements, participating in curriculum projects or mentoring projects, hosting school visits or carrying out mock interviews.

The Employment Department is interested to know more about employer involvement in education business link activity. It therefore commissioned the Institute for Employment Studies,

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[1] The Education Secretary was speaking at the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 18 January 1995.

[2] IFF (1991, 1992, 1993, 1994). *Skill Needs In Britain*. These studies look at employers with more than 25 employees.

under the auspices of the Employment Commentary Programme, to conduct a wide-ranging study of employers' views.

This report presents the findings of the study, which represents one of the most systematic assessments of employers' involvement in education business links to be conducted in England.[1]

1.1 Research objectives

At the outset, it was agreed that the study would focus on four main aspects of employer involvement with education:

- **Employer objectives** — *ie* what employers are looking for in education business link activity and what drives them to become involved.
- **Link activities** — *ie* in what sort of events and programmes employers participate and how these meet their objectives.
- **The process of involvement** — *ie* how employers become involved including their approaches and policies towards education business links; the role of agencies such as Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) in securing employer involvement; and how employers judge the success of their involvement.
- **Constraints** — *ie* the reasons why some employers do not get involved and what deters those who are already involved from doing more.

In agreement with the Department, we paid particular attention to employer involvement with teacher placements, looking at the reasons for their participation and the benefits that have flowed from it.

1.2 Research methodology

A three-pronged research methodology was developed to meet the objectives for the study incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements.

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[1] Just after the research was commissioned the CBI published *'Creating a Learning Community'*, a review of education business links, which is partly based on a survey of employers conducted by the London School of Economics, Bennett R J (1994) *CBI Survey of School-Business Links: Business Survey*. This survey draws on data from a sample of 107 CBI members.

1.2.1 Postal survey

A key part of the study was a major postal survey of employers in England. The questionnaire is set out in Appendix A. The sample was drawn from two sources:

- six Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) (two each from London, the South West and the North East) who kindly agreed to give us a sample of employers randomly drawn from their databases. We were able to use a total of 1,257 useable names and addresses from EBPs. Throughout the report, respondents from this source are referred to as the **EBP sample**; and
- a random sample of 1,796 employers drawn from the Dun and Bradstreet database, from different regions of the country to avoid duplication (*ie* East Anglia, the East Midlands, the West Midlands, Greater Manchester and the North West). We refer to respondents from this source as the **random sample.**

We adopted this approach to ensure that we achieved:

- sufficient numbers of 'involved' employers to ensure detailed analysis (hence the EBP sample)
- sufficient numbers of employers in each size category to allow comparisons to be made
- a mixed sample so that we could compare the behaviour of those involved with EBPs with those that were not.

At the time we closed the survey, we had achieved a 57.2 per cent response from the EBP sample and the random sample produced a 40.1 per cent response. Altogether, we received a total of 1,389 useable returns: a response rate of 47.1 per cent.[1]

In the report, we focus on the random sample where we are looking to draw conclusions about employers in general. However, in most of the report we are looking at employers who are involved with education links. Comments here are generally based on the numbers of those involved from both the EBP and the random sample combined. This group is referred to as the **whole involved sample.**

Sources of bias

It is important that sources of bias within the various samples are recognised when interpreting the findings of the research. The EBP sample is not representative of employers as a whole, but does reflect a cross-section of employers involved with partnerships.

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[1] The survey was closed on 1 February 1995.

There are two sources of bias in the random sample. First, we had deliberately skewed our original sample of employers towards larger companies. Because larger companies tend to be much more involved in links than smaller ones, this is a source of sample bias. To counteract this, where we seek to draw general conclusions about employers, we have reweighted the response to take account of this and reflect the size distribution of employers as a whole. Secondly, it appears that there is a further source of response bias in our achieved sample towards employers that have links with education. We conducted a non-response analysis (see Appendix A), which shows that non-respondents from the random sample had a much lower propensity than respondents to get involved in links with education. We have corrected for this element of bias where possible but nevertheless it should be borne in mind when interpreting the results.

Although we sought responses on an establishment basis, *ie* to cover the particular workplace to which the survey was addressed, in some cases our respondents chose to reply on a multi-site basis. Most of these are included in the 1,000 employee plus category.

Presentation of results

We have split the achieved sample into five roughly equal categories by size of employer (under 25 employees, 25 to 99 employees, 100 to 299 employees, 300 to 999 employees and 1,000 or more employees). For ease of presentation, where appropriate, some of these size bands have been merged.

Similarly, we have details of respondents' prime business activity and therefore have been able to determine their industrial sector. In fact, there appears little differentiation between the sectors so, in most cases, the results are discussed merely in terms of the production sector (including agriculture, energy and water, manufacturing and construction *ie* SIC 0 to 5) and the service sector (including distribution, hotels and catering, transport, business services and other services, *ie* SIC 6 to 9). We also distinguished between public sector and private sector employers.

1.2.2 Follow-up interviews

To collect more detailed information, we conducted a number of face-to-face and telephone interviews with a selection of respondents. We talked not only to those who were involved (to understand more about the reasons for, and nature and process of, their involvement) but also to some employers who were not involved (to understand more about why not and what would influence them to become involved).

In all, we conducted a total of 43 face-to-face and 38 telephone interviews for this study. Most were involved with education, although we did interview some 28 not-involved companies. In addition, we have drawn on relevant data from previous studies where appropriate. The interviews followed a semi-structured format using a series of discussion guides.

1.2.3 Literature review

In addition to the fieldwork, in the course of the study we collected and reviewed a number of national and local studies of employer interaction with education, and the relevant findings are referred to at appropriate points throughout the report.

1.3 Structure of the report

The report is divided into seven substantive chapters.

Chapter 2 looks at the reasons why employers participate in education business links and also looks at the reasons for their involvement with the teacher placement programme in particular.

Chapter 3 concentrates on the activities in which employers engage and the type of educational institution with which they build up partnerships.

The process of employer involvement is covered in Chapter 4, which looks at employers' overall approaches, whether they have designated education policies, managers and budgets, and how they evaluate the success of their involvement.

The role of the various partnership agencies is considered in Chapter 5. In particular, we concentrate on employers' views of Education Business Partnerships and their influence on employer involvement.

Chapter 6 examines the information from employers who are currently not involved in education business link activity and also looks at the potential for their participation at some point in the future.

Chapter 7 considers the potential for more involvement in the future from employers who are already engaged in education business links.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws together all the various strands of the research into a series of conclusions on employer involvement in education business links and the complications of the research findings for all those involved.

Appendix A includes further details of the research methodology, including the survey response rates and a copy of the questionnaire.

1.4 Main findings

1.4.1 The reasons employers become involved in education

The vast majority of employers in the survey (84.6 per cent of the reweighted random sample) believe that there should be links between employers and education. However, for many employers, such links are a minor rather than a major business priority.

Employers in our survey get involved with education for a wide range of reasons. The most important are to achieve what can be seen as indirect benefits associated with enlightened self-interest, *ie* benefits to employers in general rather than the participant in particular. These include influencing young people in their attitudes to work and their career choices. The second most important set of reasons concern more altruistic goals, such as putting something back into the community or providing education with management expertise.

Less important overall, but still a major motivation to some employers, are more self-interested reasons to do with achieving specific human resource or commercial objectives. Examples of the former include building up good recruitment channels or gaining a better understanding of modern qualifications. The least important set of reasons cover the achievement of commercial objectives such as marketing or purchasing training, or other services.

The results suggest that to most employers the balance of their relationship with education is thought to be more 'giving' than 'receiving'. We have also found that employers are seeking to place their relationships on a more business-like footing and establish clear rationales for links.

Looking specifically at teacher placements, most of the employers in our survey that provided placements did so to enable teachers to gain a better understanding of the world of work and to influence the curriculum to make it more 'business friendly'. The main benefit that employers realised was improved contacts with schools and colleges. The views expressed by employers clearly underlines the point that they believe they are providing a service to education, that would be of benefit to employers as a whole in the long run.

1.4.2 The activities in which employers get involved

On the basis of the random survey and allowing for both sample and response bias, we estimate that around a third of employers were involved in formal links with education such as work experience, attending careers events or hosting school visits. Generally, larger employers were more likely to be involved and to take part in a wider range of activities than smaller ones.

The most popular activity, in terms of the most employers participating, is work experience. Overall, 88.2 per cent of the employers in our survey who were involved in education business links (*ie* the whole involved sample) provided placements, with no significant variation across the size ranges. It was also seen, by far, as the most valuable and the most successful. Most employers provided five or fewer placements a year.

Hosting school visits was the next most popular activity, with just under a half or our employers involved. Visits were generally seen as worthwhile and successful.

Attendance at careers events was also fairly widespread and thought to be valuable in theory. However, in practice, it was felt to be one of the least successful forms of link and was criticised in particular for being not well targeted.

Teacher placements were mainly offered by larger employers. Only around 11 per cent of employers in the whole involved sample, with under 100 employees, provided teacher placements. Although they were not thought particularly valuable, those that did take part thought them fairly successful. A number of employers complained about lack of demand for placements from teachers and, in some cases, lack of preparation.

Only a minority of employers involved in links took part in mentoring, but some of those that were thought the benefits to be highly visible, both for the young person concerned and the employee mentor.

Employer placements were highlighted as one of the targets in the Government's 1994 Competitiveness White Paper (along with work experience and teacher placements). However, very few employers in our survey, under five per cent, were involved. Although some employers who had been on placements were enthusiastic, most gave them a low success rating.

Employers are involved with a wide variety of partners. Over 80 per cent of those in the whole involved sample had links with, on average, six secondary schools; 61 per cent had links with further education colleges; 47 per cent with universities; and 30 per cent with primary schools. Larger employers were more

likely to be involved with all types of educational institution than smaller ones, particularly universities. Most employers did not have a preference for teaming up with a particular type of institution — underlying their general, rather than specific, motives for getting involved in the first place. Of those that did, higher education was seen as the most important, followed by secondary schools and further education colleges.

The importance of planning and preparation as a key ingredient of successful projects came through strongly from both the survey and the interviews.

We could find no obvious link between the reasons employers engage with education in the first place and the activities in which (and the partners with whom) they become involved. This may well be because the majority of employers participate in what they are invited to join, rather than take the initiative and seek out particular partners or activities.

1.4.3 The process of employer involvement

According to the survey, most employers adopt an *ad hoc* approach to education, with participation depending either on education taking the initiative or chance contacts. A third said that they adopted a proactive stance, seeking out the links and partners they wanted. Larger firms had a greater tendency than smaller ones to be proactive, but still 28 per cent of employers with under 100 employees adopted this approach. Employers with links with an EBP were far more likely than the rest to say that they adopted a proactive stance. They were also more likely to have a formal policy towards education links with clear objectives, a designated manager and budget, and a strong history of involvement.

A third of the involved employers in the survey said that they had a formal policy towards education links, particularly larger employers and those in the public and service sectors. Policies were generally unwritten and linked to formal or informal mission or values statements.

In a number cases, employers were revising their policies to provide more focus to their link activities and to more clearly identify and achieve business objectives.

The existence of a policy was a demonstration that an employer had a thought-out commitment towards education business links and that partnership activity was well ingrained in the organisation. While this was generally an indication that the commitment would be sustained in the long-term, it was not a guarantee, especially where the policy was set at head office level but not acted on at the local level, or where the commitment rested on the enthusiasm of a few key individuals.

Most employers in the whole involved sample, some 60 per cent, had a nominated person responsible for links with education, with no variation by employer size. The most common job title was personnel manager or director, followed by training manager/director. In only three per cent of the cases where there was a designated manager, were they called an 'education manager' or the equivalent.

Around 11 per cent of involved employers had an education links budget, with incidence again rising with size. Where there was no separate budget, any money required generally came out of either a training or a marketing budget. Staff time is the key resource employers provide, at a median level of 0.73 hours per employee during 1994. Employers also offer the use of their premises or equipment. Few provide donations of cash or equipment. Where they do, the median amount was £7 per employee in 1994.

Less than one in five involved employers formally evaluate their link activities, with the rest either relying on informal feed back from schools, colleges or students or repeat requests. Some companies were becoming more interested in evaluating their involvement as they adopted a more business-oriented policy towards partnership activity.

Looking across all the approaches and procedures adopted by employers, it is possible to draw a clear distinction between roughly a fifth of the involved employers in the sample who adopted a systematic proactive approach and the rest who relied on a more *ad hoc* approach. Around a quarter of the proactive group could be classed as 'super-proactive' employers, combining whole-hearted enthusiasm with professional internal systems (*ie* have a policy, a manager *and* a budget).

Employers with a systematic proactive approach were distinctive in that they generally wanted more from partnership activity, were involved in a wider range of activities with a wider range of partners and felt they had achieved high levels of success. While large employers were well-represented in this group, it also included a significant proportion of smaller ones. Systematic proactive employers were most likely to come from the public sector and the service sector.

1.4.4 The role of agencies

Most of our employers with links were aware of Young Enterprise, Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) and the Teacher Placement Service. Only around one in four had links with an EBP. Of those, 30 per cent were members of an executive board or sub-committee. Most were registered on an EBP database and took part in EBP sponsored activities. EBPs were generally thought to be more effective at getting employers involved in links, and putting them in touch with schools and

colleges, than at publicising their involvement, helping them to prepare or helping them evaluate.

The more proactive employers tend to be more involved in EBPs, sitting on committees and the like. They tend to have a higher opinion of EBPs than other employers. However, they have less need of an EBP to initiate, consolidate or improve their involvement with education links activities.

1.4.5 Employers who are not involved

The main reasons why some employers do not get involved in education business links revolve particularly around the lack of time, but also the perceived lack of value and/or lack of awareness about how to be involved. About 30 per cent of our employers who had not been involved said that they would like to at some point in the future and almost the same again did not know.

The potential exists for increasing employer involvement, through better promotion of the sort of things employers could do, a more clear exposition of the benefits to employers and making it easier for them to become involved, *eg* by schools and colleges initiating contact.

1.4.6 Potential for greater involvement

Returning to those respondents who are involved, around a third said that they expected to increase their level of participation in the future — mostly in a wider range of links, although some were proposing a deeper and more focused involvement. The key factors limiting further involvement were the amount of staff time available, the amount of finance available and the need for more clearly identified business benefits. Deficiencies in the systems for involvement were less of a problem but improvement in this regard would still influence 85 per cent to some degree.

The recession has had an impact, through limiting the capacity of employers to become involved and reducing the need for some to use link activity to support recruitment. Employer involvement may therefore be linked to the business cycle.

The attitude of education is also important as some employers are put off by what they see as the lack of priority and attention given to link activity in the curriculum and among key staff in some schools and colleges.

1.4.7 Implications

A notable finding of this research is the lack of evaluation done by employers and the little help they feel they get from EBPs in

this respect. It would seem that the development of clear success indicators and simple evaluation techniques to help employers see the effectiveness of their involvement would be useful. Such a development would also help with the general promotion of employer involvement in education business links by providing the material for a clear exposition of the benefits to employers. It should also help employers ensure that their policies in the area of education business links are being enacted on the ground.

In most cases, from the employers' perspective, links are not self-sustaining. There is therefore an important role for third parties to play in getting those interested in becoming involved to participate and those involved in an *ad hoc* way to be more proactive and systematic. Third parties could also help employers prepare for and evaluate their involvement.

In terms of particular programmes, the impression gained from this study is that more could be done to ensure a consistent high standard of work experience placements across the country. Careers events were a particular source of concern in that employers like them in theory but appear more disappointed in practice. Teacher placements were generally well received by those who did take part. However, there was a feeling that more could be made of the opportunities available. Poor planning and preparation were a particular irritation to employers. The message from this research on employer placements in schools is that TECs and EBPs are going to have to work extremely hard to achieve the Government's target. To succeed, the benefits to all parties need to be clearly communicated and the value trumpeted by employers who have found the experience beneficial.

The final thought is that there is a fund of goodwill amongst the business community towards involvement in links with education. However, it is unclear whether education is taking full advantage of this opportunity. Most employers rely on education to set the agenda and will continue to do so. Our conclusion is that the supply of links from the employer side is not a significant constraint to the further development of education business links. The implication is that the level and quality of demand from education may be.

2. Why Do Employers Become Involved With Education?

The majority of the employers who replied to our postal survey thought that education business links were a 'good thing'. Looking just at the re-weighted random sample, 84.6 per cent (including almost all the larger employers, with 300 or more employees) agreed with the statement that there should be links between employers and education (involving two-way exchanges of people, resources and information). While one would expect a high level of agreement with such a 'motherhood and apple pie' statement, it does indicate widespread support for the principle of partnership between business and education. Although the principle of links with education received widespread support, it was also apparent that most employers saw them as a peripheral rather than a core activity.

The great many employers back up their belief with action and get involved with some form of link or partnership with education. We examine the forms that these links take in the next chapter. In the rest of this chapter we examine the motivations and reasons behind employers' involvement with education, based mainly on the whole involved sample.

2.1 Employer motivations

Employers forge links with education for a wide range of reasons. We have grouped the reasons together into three broad categories relating to:

- **narrow self-interest** — employers engage in links with education to achieve specific gains of direct benefit to themselves. These include securing *human resource* objectives such as the building up of recruitment channels, gaining a better understanding of modern qualifications, accessing management development opportunities, and accessing the latest learning techniques. There are also more *commercial* objectives, such as building up a good marketing profile in the local community, or purchasing training or other services.
- **general or enlightened self-interest** — another set of objectives relate to benefits which may not be accrued directly but are shared between peers. This more 'enlightened' reasoning covers aims such as raising the economic and industrial understanding of students, influencing young

Table 2:1 Reasons why links with education are important

Links with education are important because:	Mean score
a) they offer a chance to influence young people and their attitudes to work	1.76
b) they enable you to show young people what interesting careers are available in your sector	2.02
c) they are a way to put something back into the local community	2.07
d) links with education help raise the economic and industrial understanding of students	2.10
e) you can help young people learn specific work-related skills	2.25
f) education can benefit from your management expertise	2.31
g) they allow you to build up good recruitment channels	2.50
h) they help you understand changes in qualifications and what they mean	2.72
i) they provide worthwhile opportunities for management development	2.80
j) they are a soft form of marketing and give you a good profile	2.86
k) you can pick up on the latest teaching and learning techniques	3.39
l) you can purchase training or other services	3.73
N = 1,162	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

people's attitudes to work and demonstrating the careers available in the sector.

- **benevolent interest** — finally there are goals reflecting a more philanthropic attitude in which the balance is towards giving rather than receiving. This is generally postulated in statements such as 'putting something back into the community' and 'education can benefit from employer management expertise'.

In the survey, we asked respondents to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a series of statements on why links with education might be important, using a five-point scale (with 1 indicating complete agreement and 5 indicating complete disagreement). The statements were developed from research carried out for the national evaluation of Education Business Partnerships and other studies[1]. The mean scores are set out in Table 2:1[2]. The statements are ranked in order (with the most popular at the top). The lower the score, the more respondents agree with the statement.

The evidence from the survey is that employers are primarily driven by motives wider than mere self-interest. Across the

[1] Hillage J *et al.*, 1994, *Progress in Partnership*, Employment Department.

[2] An average score is three, above which it could be assumed that more people disagree than agree with the statement.

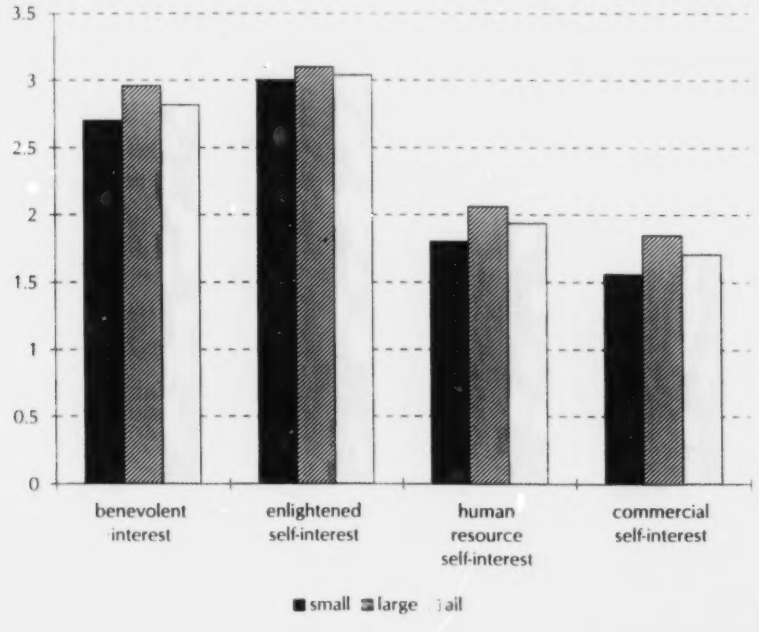
whole sample, respondents were more likely to signal their agreement with the statements that indicated some form of benevolent or, in particular, enlightened self-interested motive for their involvement with education. The chart below (Figure 2:1) shows the mean scores for the four groups of statements outlined above *ie:*

- self-interest based on commercial objectives (statements j and l in Table 2.1)
- self-interest based on human resource objectives (g, h, i and k)
- enlightened self-interest objectives (a, b and d)
- benevolent objectives (c and f).

The scale has been reversed for presentational purposes so the higher the level of agreement, the higher the bar (on the graph). The chart clearly shows that employers are most likely to adopt an enlightened or benevolent rationale for their involvement with education links. It also show that large employers (in this case those with 300 or more employees) are generally more positive about all four forms of motivation compared to small employers (with under 100 employees). Larger employers therefore have a wider range of reasons than smaller ones for getting involved.

Detailed analysis of the random sample shows that employers with connections to an EBP (see Chapter 5) are slightly more likely than other firms to emphasise reasons in the enlightened self-interest or benevolent categories.

Figure 2: 1 Employer motivations for engaging in education business links



Source: IES survey, 1995

Our findings reflect, to some extent, other work in the area. For instance at BP, Smithers and Marsden[1] used a technique they termed 'value assessment' to develop five core benefits to the company from its school links activities. They were ranked in the following order, with the more indirect (goodwill) benefits seen as more important than the direct benefits of helping with management development or recruitment:

- earns goodwill
- contributes to the motivation and development of staff
- gives access to resources (*ie* expertise and facilities)
- helps recruitment in the short or long-term
- creates opportunities to understand, influence and learn from education.

The OECD[2] makes the point that many businesses are willing to become involved in partnerships with education 'either for altruistic reasons or as part of an understanding among the business community that a common effort will work to everyone's advantage'. In making what is often referred to as a 'strategic investment' in education, businesses hope that their employees will be better prepared not only for work but for future learning as adults. The study groups the benefits to business together into three categories:

- those that are of direct and tangible benefit, such as improved recruitment potential
- direct but intangible benefits that are too abstract to quantify, such as publicity and the impact on the culture of the organisation, and
- indirect contributions to the performance of the firm that come from a better understanding of education and learning and the development opportunities that education links provide.

Our findings also broadly follow those of a survey of construction industry employers which found that there were 'definite benefits' for employers participating in link activities such as 'opportunities to raise the profile and improve the image of the construction industry in addition to increased understanding of current educational practices and the abilities of young people'.[3]

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1 Smithers A and Marsden C, 1992, *Assessing the Value*, BP.

2 OECD, 1992, *Schools and Business: a New Partnership.*

3 Sims D and Stoney S, 1992, *Curriculum Centre Initiative*, CITB.

The recent Centre for Education and Industry (CEI) report, based on 50 mainly large companies with a track record of involvement with education, found that the most important aim for links was to 'raise educational standards both among potential recruits and more widely', followed by 'enhancing the reputation of the firm and its products'.[1]

The results of our survey lay greater emphasis on the indirect community or sector-wide benefits that are less easily rooted in direct self interest than these previous studies. In this way, it most closely corresponds with the preliminary findings of a study currently being undertaken at the Durham University Business School which is looking at links between small and medium sized enterprises and education in Teesside.[2]

In discussion with employers in the interviews, it emerged that underlying community-based motivations, were often more self-interested aims and objectives. Furthermore, as we will see below, we also found that businesses are generally adopting a more commercial attitude to links.

Analysing the results in more detail shows that employers do not fit into simple categories based on these sets of motives. In fact employers tend to adopt a mix. The general attitude was typified by one major retail chain where we were told that the company saw:

> *'multiple benefits from being involved with education, although recruitment and marketing are side issues.'*

Below we look in more detail at some of the reasons employers gave for getting involved.

2.1.1 Community involvement

A significant group of employers are primarily driven by philanthropic motives to become involved with education. For instance, one Japanese-owned manufacturer told us:

> *'Our involvement with education is based on the company aims and beliefs statement which includes putting something back into the community as well as ensuring the development of high quality staff and a commitment to customers etc. Contributing to the local community is very strong in the Japanese culture and is encouraged by head office in Japan. Any benefits we get through marketing or recruitment are strictly spin-offs and not a reason for involvement. We have a genuine desire to help education and the community in some way.'*

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1 Miller A *et al.*, 1995, *Making Education our Business*, Employment Department.

2 Enterprise and Education Unit, Durham University Business School.

However, in many cases there are business reasons underlying a commitment to the local community. One interviewee said:

> *'The local community is the source of our business and we want to give something back. We, as a business, have probably touched on the lives of every family in the area. That alone is a good reason to get involved with education.'*

Similarly a representative from a major bank told us:

> *'The banks are prominent local businesses and so owe it to the community to put something back.'*

More generally, another respondent argued:

> *'We see education and business as being the fabric of a successful local economy and community — both need to be thriving and there needs to be synergy for the local community to survive.'*

In other cases, the motivation is more personal. This tends to be truer in smaller firms. For example, in one small construction company we visited, one of the partners was heavily involved in education links. Although they had secured 'spin-off' benefits in terms of recruiting young people from work experience placements and a good local image, he said:

> *'Even if the company was not mentioned and we did not need to recruit we would still be involved because of the personal satisfaction we get out of it.'*

2.1.2 Staff development

In looking for direct benefits to the business, interviewees mentioned the opportunities for staff development that were presented by working with education, although this was generally seen as a secondary rather than primary motivation.

For instance, a brewery which had recently adopted a more business-oriented approach to their links with education had identified staff development as one of their objectives:

> *'Staff will be expected to get involved where possible and it will form part of their individual training plans. Specifically, leadership and presentation skills and mentoring will be encouraged. It is thought that involving all employees in links will also be motivating in itself.'*

Presentation skills development for managers was one of the benefits identified by another respondent and in a third case a company told us:

> *'We find that linking young managers to schools, students and projects tells us a lot about their management skills.'*

2.1.3 Marketing as an underlying motive

Presenting a favourable image of the organisation or its products and services was another subsidiary if not an underlying reason why a number of our case study employers (around a fifth) became involved with education.

For example, a public transport company was setting up a new system and used their public relations budget to develop links with education. It felt that young people would be one of the main users of their transport system and they wanted to sell the idea to them and their parents. Although marketing was therefore the main reason, it was also motivated by a desire to 'serve the greater good as well'.

In some of the interviews, it only emerged in discussion that notions of beneficence were underpinned by harder motives such as achieving a positive local profile or securing good recruitment channels.

A motor vehicle repairer told us that although its main motive for getting involved with education was a desire to contribute to the local community, a subsidiary reason was to develop possible business among parents and relatives 'ensuring we maintain our market share'.

A major retail bank had indicated on their questionnaire that marketing and profile were low priority. However, the bank is involved in a new initiative to develop financial literacy in schools. The initiative is aimed at young people at the age at which they begin to think about opening bank accounts and it emerged in the interview that expanding its business among young people was a key underlying factor in the development of the initiative. That said, the interviewee was keen to stress the positive contribution of the bank towards the local community.

Another bank said that although part of their involvement lay in the national policy to be 'prominent members of the community', there was also a strictly business motivation as well:

> *'We want to have a high profile in the minds of young people so that when they make their minds up about which bank to go with, we will be well represented.'*

In some cases, there may be a problem with our terminology. For example, one interviewee said that she drew a distinction between 'marketing' which was product-driven and 'corporate profile or reputation'. Being a brewing and catering company, this company did not want to be seen marketing alcoholic products to young people, but they were interested in generally enhancing their image of their outlets and therefore 'getting more traffic through the door'.

2.1.4 Improving the image of the sector

A key motivation for many employers — at least a quarter of those interviewed — was to improve what they thought was a negative image of working life in their sector.

One company wanted to 'sell' manufacturing as a viable career route. Engineering companies in particular used their links with education to dispel what they felt were the negative images that prevailed about the sector at school. In the survey, engineering companies were more likely than the sample as a whole to express strong agreement with the statement 'links with education are important because they enable you to show what interesting careers are available in your sector'. Around 42 per cent of engineering companies signalled complete agreement with the statement compared with 34 per cent of the whole sample.

The survey data were backed up by the interviews. For instance, the respondent from one major engineering company said:

> *'The main reason for our involvement is because engineering has such a filthy reputation. We are also concerned to give young people a fair understanding of the industry and to improve the relevance of the curriculum. The senior management see no spin-offs of direct benefit to the company, although I suppose it does improve our image and present some opportunities for staff development.'*

Similar sentiments were expressed by other interviewees:

> *'We need to get across a cleaner image about industry, changing the preconceived notions that most applicants to this company seem to have.'*

> *'Engineers have no status in this country and the industry has a terrible image. We need to get to young people early on and demonstrate how engineering is essential and permeates all of our lives.'*

> *'We want to address the misapprehension in schools as to what is involved in an engineering firm.'*

One company had a specific objective of raising the profile of engineering as a career choice for girls.

Sector-based objectives were not confined to engineering. For example, one major department store we visited said that one of its prime motives was:

> *'to give schools a proper view of retailing, as it is perceived as the duffers' option.'*

A hotel became involved with education business links to counteract recruitment difficulties and get rid of:

'the bad impressions in schools and among parents of low pay, long hours and poor working conditions.'

In the same way a construction company became involved in links with education in the mid-1980s when they were short of staff and skills, and used the contacts to get recruits into the industry. Another building firm was concerned to:

'overcome the bad image the industry has in the press and paint a more positive picture to young people who may be thinking of building as a career.'

2.1.5 Influencing education

The most important reason for many employers (over half the case study companies) was to influence young people's attitudes to and understanding of the world of work. As one interviewee argued:

'Industry must not complain about the deficiencies in people leaving school but do something about it.'

One respondent felt they were involved in a long-term campaign to influence the industrial content of education. Another said that work now needed a much greater variety of skills than it used to and so young people need every possible help to prepare them for the world of employment. He explained:

'This means helping in providing opportunities and access to activities that place education in a wider context.'

One company has the clearly stated objective of being involved in 'those programmes and events which enable students to become better prepared for the world of further education and adult work'. On the other hand another respondent, from a theatre with an extensive education links programme, argued:

'Work is not the be all and end all of life and that people need preparation for life itself and their personal lives and how to make the most of it, not just their working lives.'

2.1.6 Other reasons

A number of other reasons were given by respondents in the survey and the main ones are set out in Table 2:2 with the number of times they were mentioned. A number of additional reasons were given, by only a few employers including one who simply said 'it's a nice thing to do!'

2.2 Why employers provide teacher placements

In the survey we specifically asked about the reasons why employers became involved in teacher placements. Firstly, respondents were asked to write in the main reasons why they

Table 2:3 Other reasons for linking with education

Reason	Number of mentions
To give ycung people an unbiased view of industry	14
To give young people confidence about working life	12
Improve staff morale	8
To help teachers make the curriculum more relevant to the world of work	7
Civic responsibility	5
Publicity	5
Benefit from joint research	5
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

provided placements for teachers. Their responses are set out in Table 2:3.

The main reasons why the employers in our survey provided placements were generally to provide teachers with experience of a different working environment and more specifically provide them with a greater awareness of industry and commerce.

The following comments were typical of the general response to the question why provide placements:

> *'. . . to develop a greater understanding between educational institutions and industry.'*
>
> *'. . . to introduce a sense of real world to teachers and redress the misinformation about our industry.'*
>
> *'. . . because teachers seldom have first hand experience of commercial/industrial work and yet 'advise' children on careers.'*
>
> *'. . . to enable teachers to experience production work and office systems.'*

Table 2:2 Reasons for involvement with teacher placements

Reasons	Proportion of respondents
To enable teachers to gain a better knowledge of business and therefore influence the curriculum	60.2
To improve the profile of the business in school(s)	29.3
To allow teachers to keep in touch with the outside world	27.4
In response to requests from schools, teachers or TPO	8.5
To learn about education	4.9
N = 259 (multiple responses allowed)	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

'. . . to give teachers an industrial insight.'

Employers tended to be reactive in their reasoning, but still saw some advantages in it for themselves:

'We provide placements because we were asked by a local school. It is a good eye opener for teachers.'

'We responded to a request from the Teacher Placement Service. We wished to increase teachers awareness of the construction industry.'

Another set of employers adopted a more philanthropic attitude seeing teacher placements as a 'good thing to do' and of general benefit, as the following respondent said:

'It's all part of a positive link with the local community.'

In most cases, employers felt that placements were either something they 'gave' to education or were a means of influencing education. Few employers sought a direct benefit in return and to learn something from education, as in the following examples:

'Placements enable us to update our understanding of teacher attitudes.'

'. . . to keep up to date with the reality of National Curriculum requirements.'

While to some, teacher placements were a particularly efficient way of achieving their objectives:

'Teachers need to have experience of the world of work outside school. They can then educate and influence a wider number of students.'

'Raising the industrial awareness of one teacher through a placement offers effective and more accurate contact with hundreds of pupils in a teacher's career. The teacher becomes our Ambassador.'

'Teacher placements are:

- *a valuable connection with someone who can influence others in education (including the students)*
- *a useful contribution and fresh approach to in-company projects*
- *a way of building links with an educational institution.'*

2.2.1 Benefits to employers

Respondents were also asked the extent to which they agreed with four statements (on a scale of one to five, with one equating to complete agreement). The results are set out in Table 2:4, with the lower the mean score, the higher the level of agreement. It is clear from this that the main benefit to employers is in terms of the opportunities placements provide to build up contacts with

Table 2:4 Benefits to employers from teacher placement

	Mean score
Improves contacts with local schools and colleges	1.99
Provides a greater understanding of how education works	2.68
Systems can be appraised from a new perspective	2.92
Provides staff development opportunities	3.03
N = 263	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

schools and colleges. However, not all found this happened in practice, as one employer told us:

> *'It is normally a missed opportunity. We have a very low success rate at developing on-going relationships with schools through teacher placements.'*

Employers see less direct benefit in terms of either using teachers to gain an alternative perspective on the way the organisation works, or in terms of providing opportunities for staff development.

In the interviews a few employers (under five) questioned the value of teacher placements, agreeing that it may be of interest to a teacher to see how a business worked but wondering what practical value they took back to their educational institution. 'Schools are not businesses and need to operate differently', said one employer interviewee. However, others recognised that a placement could 'demystify' the business world for those teachers with no knowledge of the area and create a more accommodating attitude to work in the private sector.

2.3 Sharper focus on business needs

Information from the interviews suggests that managers are having to make a clearer business case within their organisation for the continuance of education links. One manager we visited from a major retail chain told us:

> *'The recession has focused attention on efficiency, so all links with schools etc. must now be clearly tied into the business and its operational needs.'*

In another case, a privatised utility, we were told that the historic motivation for involvement in education was primarily altruistic. However a more commercial ethos now pervaded the organisation. As a result:

> *'Education links are far more focused on meeting corporate objectives. This does not mean to say that 'putting something back into the*

community' is no longer an issue, but it has become a less important motivating factor.'

A small local brewery had a tradition of community involvement, which they perceived to be part of their responsibility as the second largest employer in the town. Recruitment was not an issue as they did not take on school leavers. However, the emphasis of the brewery's involvement with education is changing due to the concerns of the new managing director.

'Community commitment is broadly the same, but now business benefits need to be defined and there is now greater organisation and focus. The desire is to integrate links more firmly into the operations of the business.'

A sharper commercial focus can lead to a change in the level or focus of involvement with education. One major engineering company we visited had cut back on recruitment over the past few years and felt that in this context it should keep a low profile with schools as there were no jobs available. Others reported that they had adopted a more targeted approach based around their perceptions of the most valuable activities and partners (see Section 4.2.1).

2.4 Conclusion

Employers become involved in education business links for a wide range of reasons. However, they say they are primarily driven by indirect or benevolent motivations rather than for reasons of narrow self-interest. Employer objectives tend to centre on providing young people with a greater understanding of the world of work and dispelling unwarranted notions about certain sectors or work in general. In this way, employers hope young people will be better prepared to make an appropriate career choice and a smooth introduction to working life. Almost as strong though is the more altruistic reason of putting something back into the community by responding to requests from education. As one person put it: 'it's a nice thing to do!'

Direct benefits such as the establishment of recruitment channels or the creation of staff development opportunities tend to be seen as advantageous spin-offs and not the main reason for linking with schools and colleges. That said, the more deeply we probed the more that commercial reasons such as building a good profile in the local community (with the associated marketing benefits) or with the workforce (with knock-on effects on morale *etc.*) seemed to underpin employer involvement.

Larger organisations tend to have a wider spectrum of reasons than smaller firms, though the balance between direct and indirect motives does not appear to vary with size.

The results suggest that to most employers the balance of their relationship with education is thought to be more 'giving' than 'receiving'. We have also found that employers are seeking to place their relationships on a more commercial footing and establish clear business rationales for links.

3. Partnerships in Practice

In this chapter, we examine the activities in which employers become involved, the type of educational institutions with which employers want to link up and the extent to which they think the links they have made are successful.

Amongst the random sample, reweighted to make it more representative of all employers, 54 per cent of employers had recently been involved in a partnership arrangement of some kind with education. However, we know from the non-response survey that even after the reweighting process our sample is biased towards those with links, particularly the smaller companies (see Appendix A). Taking this response bias into account, we estimate that around a third of employers (with five or more employees) have links with education.

Larger employers are far more likely than smaller ones to form links with education. Again looking at the reweighted random sample and taking account of the response bias, we estimate that under a quarter of smaller employers (with between five and 24 employees) have links, compared with over three-quarters of larger employers with 300 or more employees.

The data in the rest of this chapter are drawn from the whole involved sample, *ie* they refer to employers known to have links with education.

3.1 Activities

Most involved employers participated in between one and three different types of activity, although a few (less than ten per cent) were involved in six or more.

Work experience is by far the most popular form of partnership activity among employers involved in links. Table 3:1 sets out the proportion of respondents to our survey who had been involved in particular activities over the last year. The vast majority (88.2 per cent) of the employers in our whole involved sample said that they had been involved in work experience.

Nearly half are involved in careers events and/or hosting school visits. Only one in twenty employers place members of their staff in schools.

Table 3:1 Participation of employers in link activities

Activity	Percentage of respondents by size (in terms of number of employees)*			
	Under 100	100 to 299	300 or more	All
Work experience	87.0	87.3	90.6	88.2
School visits	32.5	52.2	61.8	47.7
Careers events	36.9	42.6	63.0	47.4
Curriculum projects	23.4	31.3	47.9	33.9
Mock interviews	17.8	26.8	43.1	28.8
Work shadowing	13.7	19.6	28.0	21.0
Teacher placements	11.5	16.2	35.5	21.0
Mentoring	14.1	19.9	24.8	19.3
Other	11.3	13.7	15.9	13.5
Employer placements	4.6	3.4	6.5	4.9
N =	*461*	*291*	*403*	*1,156*

Whole involved sample

* Respondents answering 'don't know' have been excluded

Source: IES survey, 1995

Employer participation generally increases with size of organisation, particularly for teacher placements. Almost half of the employers in the 300 to 999 employee category had provided placement opportunities for teachers in the past year. Public sector and service sector organisations tended to be involved in a much wider range of activities than those from the private sector and the production sector.

In the interviews it emerged that activities such as careers events and schools visits were valued by employers, as they were seen as 'mass events' and affected the widest number of young people. Activities geared to individual needs were generally seen as less important, though still of value.

Looking in more detail at the random sample, employers with links to an EBP tend to be involved in a far wider range of activities than those that are not connected to an EBP. The one exception is work experience, where nine out of ten in both samples participate, reflecting the universal appeal of this activity. This is true for the sort of activities that EBPs tend to be instrumental in organising (*eg* 50 per cent of those with links to an EBP provided teacher placements, compared with 19 per cent of those without links). It is also true for activities such as careers events (where 87.8 per cent of those connected to an EBP took part, compared with only 48.8 per cent of those with no connection).

We also asked involved employers to identify the three activities which they considered to be most valuable to their organisation. The results are set out in Table 3:2. Work experience was the

Table 3:2 Most valuable activity

Activity	Percentage of respondents by size (in terms of number of employees)			
	Under 100	100 to 299	300 or more	All
Work experience	85.2	85.0	85.3	85.2
Careers events	29.8	34.2	38.2	34.0
School visits	28.8	40.8	34.5	33.9
Curriculum projects	21.6	23.8	30.2	25.3
Mock interviews	17.3	11.9	9.1	16.6
Teacher placements	10.0	14.6	21.4	15.8
Work shadowing	14.5	11.9	11.2	12.7
Other	10.8	13.5	11.5	11.7
Mentoring	10.3	11.9	10.2	10.7
Employer placements	2.8	3.5	2.4	2.8
N =	*399*	*260*	*374*	*1,033*
Whole involved sample				

Source: IES survey, 1995

activity which was most commonly cited as being of value, by far. Nearly 90 per cent of our sample rated work experience as one of the three most valuable activities in which they were engaged. A third also thought careers events and school visits were valuable, and over a quarter liked curriculum projects. Other activities were valued by less than a fifth of the sample, with employer placement bringing up the rear.

There is more variation by size of organisation than in Table 3:1. Smaller firms tend to see greater value than larger employers in providing mock interviews and work shadowing opportunities, and less in attending careers events, hosting school visits and providing teacher placements. Larger firms may place a greater value on teacher placements because in some cases they are seen as linked to other forms of activity, such as developing a curriculum project or planning work experience placements or a school visit.

The data in Table 3:2 mirror those in Table 3:1 and suggest that employers get involved in the activities in which they place most value. However, the evidence from the interviews suggests that the causality may, in fact, be the other way round. Most employers seem to value activities because they are the ones in which they are asked to participate. Obviously, employers will not get involved in what they see as totally fruitless activities. Nevertheless, the values attached to links with education generally appear to be based on what best fulfils education's needs, within the context of the employers' overall objectives. As we saw in the last chapter, these tend to be general rather than

Table 3:3 Most successful activity

Activity	Mean score	Median score
Work experience	2.06	1.57
Curriculum projects	2.11	1.66
School visits	2.13	1.67
Teacher placements	2.28	1.98
Mentoring	2.31	1.96
Mock interviews	2.33	2.05
Work shadowing	2.46	2.15
Careers events	2.56	2.33
Employer placements	2.60	2.67
N = 1,032		
Whole involved sample		

Source: IES survey, 1995

specific and so allow scope for educational institutions to set the agenda.

For example, a major engineering company we visited could not identify any activity that was of particular value to them. The firm relies on schools to identify what they want and then it does its best to help.

Finally, we asked our respondents to rate the success of the three most valuable links on a scale of one to five (with one being very successful and five being very unsuccessful). The mean and the median scores are shown in Table 3:3 — the lower the score the higher the success rating. Work experience again comes out top, but fairly closely followed by curriculum projects and school visits. Teacher placement, mentoring and mock interviews all have a similar, middle-ranking, success rate. The results suggest that these activities, in which most employers do not take part, are reasonably well appreciated by those that do.

The most striking result concerns careers events. Employers take part in them and think they are valuable in theory, but the results in Table 3:3 indicate that employers think they are less successful in practice.

Employer placements again prop up the table, suggesting that even the few employers that have participated do not see them as a relative success.

One significant factor influencing the success of a project, according to some of our interviewees is preparation. One said:

> *'The worst thing is dealing with schools that do not know what they want. It is difficult to know what to offer them and if you are not careful you get dragged into things you don't want to do.'*

The biggest problem encountered by another respondent was 'poor briefing of teachers'.

> *'We get countless requests from students to assist them in business studies projects but they have no focus to their requests. People just come in and say "can you help me with my business studies. The teacher suggested I go to you for advice". They don't have clear objectives and have little idea of what they want when they come. The company is willing to help students, but would like them to come in small groups with a clear focus for their visit.'*

Below, we look at each of the activities in more detail, looking in particular at the extent and form of involvement.

3.1.1 Work experience

All types of employers in our sample provided work experience placements and there was little variation by size and sector. The average number of work experience places provided was 13, but there was a large range from the 16 per cent of the sample that provided just one placement to the 1.5 per cent that provided 100 or more placements. One respondent said they had placed 600 young people in the past year. However, most employers had made a more modest commitment, with 60 per cent providing five or fewer placements.

Most of the employers we interviewed thought work experience to be valuable and that it could be an effective learning experience for the young people involved, providing them with a good insight to the working world. As one personnel manager we interviewed put it:

> *'Work experience is vital, as it is very important to give good work preparation to school leavers; many are very poorly prepared.'*

Others pointed to a more fundamental influence that work experience can have:

> *'If properly structured, work experience can give young people a real understanding of what industry is about at a formative age.'*

> *'It is very noticeable, the impact it has on young people.'*

> *'It makes life easier when it comes round for real.'*

> *'Work experience provides youngsters with an essential insight to what is expected of them when they leave school, both in terms of getting a job and being inducted into a company. There is also the added bonus of picking up the odd employee.'*

It does appear that employers see particular value in work experience activities. A director of a construction firm told us that he felt work experience to be:

> *'The paramount link between education and business. It helps smooth the transition between school and work, which is essential: otherwise pupils go into the market place without a clue.'*

Employer involvement in education: example

A retail bank has focused its involvement on a new initiative aimed at secondary schools. The programme will supersede all previous activities and represents a significant expansion. It consists of class simulations, enterprise activities, teacher placement and work experience. The latter is now thought to be much more structured around clearly stated objectives. Each student will be linked to an individual at a bank. Simulations have been designed to provide real life role playing scenarios and other interactive exercises. 'Enterprise' involves groups of students setting up and running a community enterprise, opening an account at the local branch.

These are the core aspects of the initiative, but it is also expected that other activities such as school visits, careers events, mentoring and work shadowing will take place, but these will depend upon the needs of the school and be discussed as relationships are built up with schools.

Another construction company told us that work experience played a useful role in letting young people see what was involved in the industry as:

> *'So many drop out at an early stage, because they do not realise how difficult a working environment it is.'*

A number of others, however, felt that work experience was important, at least in part, because schools wanted it and feedback suggested that it was important.

A Group Training Manager from a motor vehicle repair group said:

> *'Work experience is the most important activity we do. It provides quality contact with large numbers of young people. We provide a very good period of experience as long as there is some commitment or interest from the young person at the outset. The only problem we have is that schools do not make as much of it as they could. There is too much concern with getting the bodies out of the door, often all in the same weeks and not enough thought given to each individual. There is a real need for schools to get together more and distribute work experience over a longer period so there is not such a burden on local employers. We would take more if it was better spread as each department can only take one kid at a time.'*

A small number of employers had suggestions as to how work experience could be improved. In the interviews, two thought that week long work experience placements were not long enough.

> *'We only take two-week placements as a minimum, and sometimes these will be ongoing with more than one visit.'*

The length of placements was not the only concern and a significant number of employers both in the survey and in the interviews were concerned about the matching of the student to the placement and the pre-placement preparation. Examples of the comments we received include:

'We offer work experience placements and generally these are successful and beneficial to both student and the office. However it greatly depends on students' attitudes and how much they want to get out of it.'

'We have been let down in the past with being sent disinterested students without any prior interview. This all dampens enthusiasm.'

'We are a very small firm [three staff]. We take youngsters for work experience but nobody seems to take the time to find compatible students.'

'The practices of a) permitting young people to search for their own work experience placement and b) allowing work experience placements to be set up without positive and direct vetting is unsatisfactory and places young people in a very dangerous position.'

The overall impression gained from these and other comments, in both the interviews and the survey, is that work experience placements are organised differently around the country and not to as a high a standard in some parts as others. In particular the attention given to matching student and employer appears to vary.

3.1.2 School visits

Again, according to our survey, it is mainly larger firms that have schools visiting their premises. Organisations from the production sector and from the public sector were more likely than their counterparts to take part in visits.

Most employers said that they hosted only one or two visits a year. But a few were much more involved, with 5.7 per cent hosting 20 or more visits a year.

One company laid aside two days a month for school visits. These days were set months ahead so that local managers could plan around them. The interviewee said that although they did not turn anyone away, they much preferred visits from primary schools.

'All the children appear so interested: they all ask questions and lap it all up. Usually when 13 or 14 year olds come they don't seem to know what to do and the only one listening appears to be the teacher!'

3.1.3 Careers events

Large employers seem more likely than smaller ones to be involved in careers events (Table 3:1). Employers from the service sector and from the public sector were also more likely to be involved in such activities. Our respondents were involved in an average of around two to three events a year (mean 3.8, median 1.6).

Employer involvement in education: example

In a project funded through a company's community fund, young people worked with some employees in developing some new ideas. One group developed a carbon-monoxide detector which is about to be manufactured and sold at no profit to the company, with any profits that are made going to the school. The young people designed the whole thing, including the packaging.

The company saw real benefits in terms of influencing the attitudes of young people. For instance, one student had said that he was only interested in art beforehand, but the project had opened his eyes to the possibilities through computer aided design and he now wanted to move into that area.

The respondent from one engineering company thought attending careers events was the most important activity in which his company got involved, adding:

> *'It is a means to give the company a high profile, while promoting the interests of engineering. It reaches a large audience and if you use young engineers it can be a very useful way of attracting interest in the company.'*

Others were more critical of careers events and they received a relatively low success rating in the survey. For instance, in one large department store, the training manager told us:

> *'Careers events are not well targeted. Fourteen and 15 year olds are too young to be choosing careers. They should be just thinking about the skills they have and the skills they need in a general sense, not tied to specific jobs which are poorly thought out.'*

In other research we have done with employers and education business links, we have found most sympathy for careers events if they were broad-based rather than narrowly recruitment driven, linked perhaps to equal opportunities (*eg* by providing alternative role models in stereotyped occupations) or sector driven (*eg* through industry days).[1]

3.1.4 Curriculum projects

Larger employers, those from the public and from the service sector are the ones most likely to take part in curriculum projects. For most employers this involves participating in one or two projects a year, although 7.6 per cent of those in our survey said they took part in ten or more activities in the past year.

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[1] See Pike G and Hillage J, *'Education and Business Links in Avon'*, a report for Avon TEC, 1995 and Hillage J, Maginn A and Pike G *'Evaluation of EBP Activities in County Durham'*, a report for County Durham TEC, 1995.

A small construction company felt that curriculum activities were 'invaluable' as they:

> *'really motivate and interest young kids enormously. We also find that the company can learn from five and six year olds from time to time.'*

3.1.5 Mock interviews

Larger employers are twice as likely as smaller employers to undertake mock interviews with young people. Service sector and public sector employers were, as usual, more involved than those from the private or from the production sector.

For most participants, involvement meant just one or two sessions a year, with a few having a deeper commitment. A little over ten per cent of our sample who were involved in mock interviews, did so five or more times a year.

Employers generally did not tend to enthuse about mock interviews. This may be associated with the current low levels of recruitment from the youth labour market.

However, those that did get involved recognised the need. One employer, who, in his view, had been involved in mock interviews all too infrequently, said:

> *'It is important to give good preparation to school leavers before they enter work. Most are poorly prepared. Interview skills are particularly lacking.'*

Others made similar remarks:

> *'It amazes me how unprepared and nervous young people are when they come to interview.'*

> *'Mock interviews give young people an essential skill — the outcomes are very obvious and you see youngsters learn a lot in a short space of time.'*

3.1.6 Work shadowing

Employer involvement in work shadowing follows a similar pattern to those outlined above, with larger employers roughly twice a likely as the smaller employers to take part, and those from the service and public sectors more likely than employers from the private sector or from production industries.

Employers who do get involved in work shadowing, generally offer only one or two places a year, although almost ten per cent of the sample provided at least ten opportunities in a 12 month period.

The director of one company involved in work shadowing thought it was:

'Highly rewarding for the students involved. The company allows the student to be involved in every aspect of their job, meetings, conferences etc. One 16 year old was completely bowled over by the places he was taken to when shadowing the MD.'

3.1.7 Teacher placements

Only around a fifth of our sample provided teacher placements, however, larger employers were three times as likely as smaller ones to be involved (Table 3:1). Again, the public sector respondents tended to be more involved than those from the private sector, but there was little difference between service and production sectors.

Most employers in the sample only offered one teacher placement opportunity in the past year and very few, just over five per cent, had offered ten placements or more. As we saw in Table 3:3, teacher placements were generally seen as reasonably successful, by employers who hosted them. One major retail chain thought that teacher placement was 'something we do well', adding:

'We have useful management skills programmes, and performance management is well developed here. Schools can benefit from our long learning curve on some of these things.'

Another company thought that teacher placements were 'potentially' very worthwhile as:

'Teachers are so ill-informed about industry and the world outside education. However, they are not done nearly enough.'

In this respondent's view, there is little demand from schools and she thought that teachers are 'frightened to come in'. She would like to focus on careers teachers so as to get across to students a better understanding of the world at work. Others also complained about a lack of demand:

'We'd be happy to provide more placements but schools don't seem to think we provide them.'

Some employers recognised the problems teachers had with getting away from their teaching duties, but questioned the value. For instance, a textile manufacturer we visited took one teacher placement a year. However, in their experience, the teachers appeared to come rather reluctantly and therefore gained little from the experience. The respondent was sympathetic to the teacher's plight. He saw the placement as coming on top of an already burgeoning workload. In response, he suggested that more planning might be a solution, but also felt that teachers had to have the time for such planning and the placement itself.

More generally, there was a feeling among a number of the interviewees that teacher placement could be better planned

and, worked best when the teacher was obviously motivated to learn. A personnel manager of one retail chain we visited said:

> *'There could be greater understanding of what the teacher wants out of it and they could be better tailored to individual needs.'*

3.1.8 Mentoring

Only a minority of employers take part in mentoring activity with young people, although those that do are fairly evenly spread across the sector and size dimensions of the sample.

Most employers were only involved with a few students, with 58.6 per cent saying that their workplaces had acted as mentors to three or fewer over the past year. One respondent said they were mentoring with 240 or more students and three said 50.

Some of the companies we visited were particularly in favour of mentoring. It was seen to be highly motivating for the mentor and the benefits were said in two cases to be 'very visible' — this was not always felt to be the case with other activities. It also was seen to have a very beneficial effect on the mentor who were sometimes considered to have learned/developed as much as the student. For this reason, one company had built mentoring into their management development programme.

Once again, planning and preparation were seen as important and one employer said:

> *'It is important to get the right person to act as a mentor. Someone who has made themselves and can act as a true role model. It is also important to get someone who is able to build a close relationship with the student. They may have poor communications skills at first but they can develop them.'*

3.1.9 Employer placements in schools

The 1994 Competitiveness White Paper[1] identified employer placements in schools and colleges as a key target for current education links activity. The White Paper encourages every employer with more than 200 employees to release at least one employee a year to spend a week in a school. Our survey shows that this is very much a minority activity at present, with under five per cent of the whole involved sample participating (Table 3:1). Interestingly, small employers were almost as likely as the largest employers to take up employer placements. It was in the middle regions, in workplaces with between 25 and 999 employees where participation was least likely. Looking

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[1] *Competitiveness — Helping Business to Win*, HMSO, 1994. Other targets identified in the White Paper related to work experience and teacher placements.

Employer involvement in education: example

A number of companies and organisations have set up curriculum centres – facilities within the workplace for pupils to visit and take part in planned projects and activities linked to the elements of the National Curriculum.

One company we visited hosted a number of school visits at its various sites. At one location it was setting up a new plant. It had decided to equip part of the old works as an education centre, with a white board, chairs, tables and basic scientific equipment. School parties could then consolidate the visit with 'hands on' experience within a classroom setting.

specifically at larger workplaces, 5.6 per cent of those with at least 100 employees, 7 per cent of those 300 or more employees and 9.8 per cent of those with 1000 or more had been involved with employer placements.

Of the 57 employers who did take up placements, three quarters took up only one or two. One employer was involved in ten placements in the past year and another was involved in 25.

However, there were some indications from the interviews that more employer placement could take place. One human resource development manager in a manufacturing company we visited said that he would like to see more of his staff:

> *'. . . going into schools, but nobody seems to take this up so it does not happen.'*

The low success rating for employer placements (Table 3:3) was reflected in some of the interviews. A director of a major leisure company, for instance, with a strong commitment to working with education said:

> *'I'm not sure of the value. I can't see any benefits of employer placements in schools so there cannot be much for a teacher to gain either. If teacher placement is going to work it must be for at least a month, otherwise it will be superficial.'*

On the other hand we did find one enthusiast. The training and recruitment officer of a health service agency we interviewed had contacted a local secondary school herself to go into the school for a day. She felt it had been very useful and had put her back in touch with education and in particular helped to clarify some of the national curriculum issues and the qualifications 'maze' she thought had developed. She quoted an example of where one pupil complained to her about doing maths and she was able to demonstrate that knowledge of the subject was of real use in her job.

3.1.10 Other activities

A number of other activities were identified by a total of 164 respondents. The most popular were:

- giving talks at schools or colleges (not specifically careers related)
- Compact
- Young Enterprise
- industrial placements
- hosting awareness programmes for teachers (outside teacher placement)
- school governors
- sponsorship.

In the interviews, a few employers felt that schools could become more of a community resort offering services, particularly to small business, in the realms of IT support and training services. As one respondent said:

> *'Small firms don't have the time or know how to get involved in training — schools and colleges have the facilities and ought to be able to provide cheap, accessible training support. They need to look at re-training and continual training as well as education.'*

The latest DFE survey of school industry links suggested that around 50 per cent of secondary schools offered commercial services to employers[1]. However, as we saw earlier this is not seen as a major benefit to be gained from closer liaison with education by most employers.

3.2 Partners

The survey asked for information about the type of educational institution with which employers had formed a link. The results, based on the whole involved sample, are set out in Table 3:4. Secondary schools are the most popular type of educational institution, with over 80 per cent of the sample involved. Six out of ten employers in our sample were involved with FE colleges and 47 per cent had links with universities. Over a quarter were involved with primary schools.

The Skill Needs in Britain survey[2] (looking at employers with at least 25 employees) found 51 per cent of employers had built up links with secondary schools, 48 per cent with further education colleges and 31 per cent with higher education establishments.

Larger employers were more likely to be involved with all types of educational institution than smaller ones, particularly for universities and less so for secondary schools. That said, a small

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1 *Survey of school-business links*, Statistical Bulletin 10/93, Department for Education, April 1993.

2 IFF (1994). *Skill Needs In Britain*.

Table 3:4 Type of educational partner

Educational institution	Proportion of respondents (%)
Secondary school(s)	83.9
Further education college(s)	61.2
Higher education (eg universities)	46.8
Primary school(s)	29.6
City technology college(s)	20.4
Special school(s)	19.5
Independent school(s)	17.8
Grant maintained school(s)	12.0

N = 1,159

Whole involved sample

* Respondents answering don't know have been excluded

Sources: IES survey, 1995, IFF, 1994

electronics firm we visited felt that the most valuable activity (to them and the students concerned) in which they were involved was to host one industrial placement a year from the local university.

Employers from the public sector were more likely than those from the private sector to be more involved with all types of educational institution. Employers from the production sector were more likely to form links with higher and further educational institutions than their service sector colleagues, but less likely for other types of institution.

A higher proportion of employers connected to an EBP in the random sample had links with each type of educational establishment, compared to other employers. This was particularly true for primary and special schools. For example, 37.9 per cent of employers in contact with an EBP had links with primary schools, compared with 16.8 per cent among the rest.

On average, employers have links with half a dozen secondary schools as well as around three independent and grant maintained schools (Table 3:5). The median values were lower (at 2.6 for secondary schools and around 1 for independent and grant maintained schools) indicating that results are skewed by a few employers with links with a large number of schools.

The mean number of links with higher education establishments is 2.9 but this is also distorted by a few very large (and probably national) organisations that have links with over 30 universities, and a similar problem occurs with the further education figure of 2.7. The median number for higher education is 1.4 and the median for further education is 1.1.

Table 3:5 Average number of links per type of educational institution

Educational institution	Mean no. of links
Secondary school(s)	6.5
Further education college(s)	2.7
Higher education (eg universities)	2.9
Primary school(s)	5.2
City technology college(s)	1.3
Special school(s)	2.8
Independent school(s)	3.0
Grant maintained school(s)	3.7
N = 1,159	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

While this may reflect the smaller numbers of these types of institutions it also suggests that employers form a more 'monogamous' relationship with further and higher educational establishments than with schools.

We also asked employers whether they considered links with any particular institution more important than the others. Most said no. Almost thirty per cent of the whole involved sample said that they did have a preference, 59 per cent said they did not and 11.4 per cent did not know.

Those who said they did have a preference were asked to state it and the results are set out in Table 3:6. Universities are the most popular, with over a third saying that they were the most important type of institution with which to forge links. Thus, while fewer organisations form partnerships with universities, those that do see them as particularly valuable. Such organisations tend to be those that either recruit graduates or value research-based links with university departments.

The other two key institutions were secondary schools and further education colleges. Only 3.1 per cent of employers thought that primary schools were the most important type of educational institution with which to link up.

Grant maintained schools came bottom of the list[1], although one interviewee found:

> *'GM schools are better to link with on work experience because they are more flexible and will adapt to the company needs.'*

[1] Of the 139 employers that said they had links with grant maintained schools, only two said they felt these links to be more important than the others.

Table 3:6 Most important type of partner

Educational institution	Proportion of respondents, by size (in terms of no. of employees) Under 100	100 to 299	300 or more	All
Higher education (eg universities)	28.9	36.4	41.3	35.5
Secondary school(s)	29.8	28.4	23.3	27.0
Further education college(s)	24.6	22.7	21.6	23.0
City technology college(s)	7.0	5.7	6.0	6.3
Primary school(s)	3.5	1.1	4.3	3.1
Independent school(s)	2.6	2.3	2.6	2.5
Special school(s)	2.6	2.3	0.7	1.9
Grant maintained school(s)	0.9	1.1	0.0	0.6
N =	*114*	*88*	*116*	*318*
Whole involved sample				

Source: IES survey, 1995

Medium-sized employers, with between 100 and 1,000 employees were more likely than smaller or larger employers to express a preference, as were those from the private sector and those from the production sector.

Looking at those which stated a preference, smaller employers in the whole sample were more likely than larger employers to prefer links with secondary schools. Preference for links with universities clearly rose with the size of firm (Table 3:6). In the interviews, employers that preferred links with higher education through, for example, student placements, tended to be relatively 'high technology' companies that did not recruit school leavers.

In discussion with a representative from a bank, it emerged that although she had indicated on the survey form that no one type of educational institution was more important than any other, links with secondary schools were particularly relevant as:

> *'It is nearest the point at which young people decide to open bank accounts.'*

This was also part of the company's rationale for not being involved with primary schools, although we were told that they received very few approaches from this quarter.

An interviewee from a hotel explained that the company found developing links with primary schools difficult:

> *'. . . partly because the Department Heads don't seem able to bring themselves down to the level of primary kids but also because it doesn't fit in with the main objectives of the company for education links.'*

In one company that had adopted a more focused approach to education links based on business objectives, this had resulted in a more targeted approach towards secondary schools, focusing on activities associated with the transition between education and employment, such as work experience and careers events. That said, the company thought that links with primary schools were simpler to conduct, as activities were more easily integrated within the curriculum.

A few (around five) organisations had developed particular modules or programmes that matched the operations of the company to the requirements of the curriculum. For example, one company had developed a series of materials for Key Stages 1 to 4, 1 and 2 were cross-curricular, 3 was science based and 4 was geography based.

3.3 Conclusion

Employers engage in a range of activities with a wide range of partners. However, in most cases involvement is limited to a few sorts of activities with a few educational institutions.

Work experience is by far the most popular activity in terms of participation, value and success. Hosting school visits to employer premises and participating in curriculum projects are also seen as important by the business community. Employers take part in careers events in significant numbers and like the idea of them, but consider them in practice to be relatively unsuccessful. Employer placements in schools have yet to catch the imagination of the business community.

The importance of planning and preparation as a key ingredient of successful projects came through strongly from both the survey and the interviews.

Although secondary schools are the most popular type of partner for employers, of those that expressed a preference more felt that higher education was the most important institution with which to forge links.

We could find no obvious link between the reasons employers became involved in education in the first place and the activities and partners with whom they become involved. This may well be because the majority of employers become involved in what they are invited to join, rather than take the initiative and seek out particular partners or activities. The approach employers adopt is more closely examined in the next chapter.

4. The Process of Involvement

In this chapter, we examine the process by which employers become involved in partnership activity with education. We look at whether employers adopt a proactive or a responsive approach, whether they have designated policies, managers and budgets to cover link activity, and whether and how they evaluate their involvement with education. Unless otherwise specified, the data refer to whole involved sample.

4.1 Overall approach to education links

In the survey, we asked respondents to describe their overall stance towards education business links. We gave them a choice between three options:

- **responsive** — you wait to be contacted by education
- **proactive** — you seek out the links you want
- **based on chance** — it depends on who meets whom and when.

The results are set out in Table 4:1 and show that most employers adopt a responsive attitude, relying on education to set both the agenda and pace of activities. This is clearly linked to the widespread view that employers are keen to do 'what education wants' (Chapter 2). However, a third take a more proactive stance and seek to set the agenda themselves.

In the interviews, it emerged that proactive/responsive were not mutually exclusive attitudes in the context of links with

Table 4:1 Employers' stance towards links with education

Activity	Percentage of respondents by size (in terms of number of employees)*			
	Under 100	100 to 299	300 or more	All
Responsive	55.7	54.6	46.2	52.2
Proactive	28.4	33.5	42.4	34.5
Based on chance	15.8	11.9	11.3	13.3
N = 1,075				
Whole involved sample				

Source: IES survey, 1995

education. For instance, one company sought well thought-out requests from schools to which it could respond. Another said that they adopted both a proactive and a responsive approach arguing:

> *'You need to have an idea of where you are going but it is also important to be ready to learn from others and take up new ideas.'*

Another company where the current stance was described as a mix between *ad hoc* and proactive was currently revising its attitude and in the future would be more proactive. Indeed, a number of organisations told us that they were not as proactive as they would like to be. 'It is difficult when you get so many requests', said one. Some are intent on taking more of an initiative in their links with education, within the context of revising their education and/or community policy (see Section 4.2 below).

Nevertheless, it is clear that there is a general distinction to be drawn between employers who said that they were proactive, and the rest (see Section 4.6 below). The proactive employers generally had:

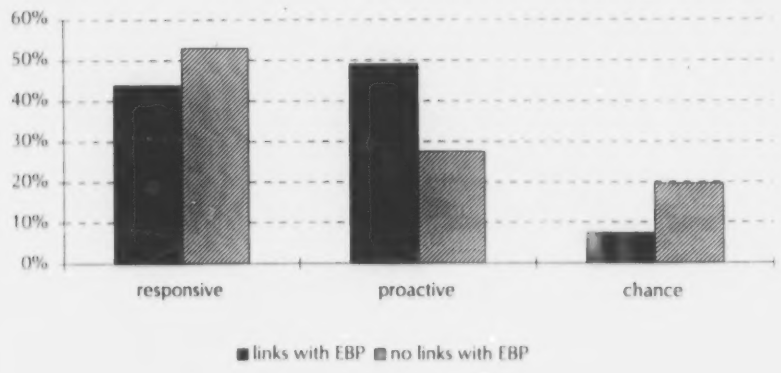
- clear objectives for their involvement with education; and
- a history of involvement which led them to have a greater understanding of what is the most appropriate form of participation in link activity.

Larger employers, with 1,000 or more employees, were most likely to adopt a proactive stance and least likely to be responsive or base their involvement on chance. Just under half of the employers in the whole sample with over 1,000 employees (49.7 per cent) said they had a proactive attitude, 40 per cent said they were responsive and 10.3 per cent said they were serendipitous. There was no major difference between smaller employers and medium sized ones on this question, although not surprisingly, employers with under 25 employees were slightly more likely than the rest to base their involvement on chance (Table 4:1).

There was no significant difference between public and private sector concerns, but 37.6 per cent of employers from the service sector said that they were proactive in seeking out links with education, compared with only 31.2 per cent from the production sector.

Comparing the two constituent samples, similar proportions of both the sample drawn from EBPs and the random sample said they had a responsive stance, however those from the random sample were more likely to have a approach based on chance and less likely to adopt a proactive approach than the EBP sample.

Figure 4: 1 Employers' approach to EBPs



Source: IES survey, 1995

The most noticeable difference was within the randomly selected employers, depending on whether they had links with an EBP or not. As shown in Figure 4:1, employers with links with an EBP were far more likely than the rest to have a proactive stance and less likely to adopt an approach based on chance or responsiveness.

Employers describing their stance as proactive were generally more likely than the rest to have an education policy, and a designated manager and budget for education links activity.

4.2 Employer policies on education links

Just under one third of the whole sample (32 per cent) said that they had a 'formal' policy towards their links with education. Some 63.2 per cent said that they did not have a policy and 4.7 per cent were not sure. Not surprisingly, it is the largest organisations in the sample that were most likely to have a policy. As shown in Table 4:2, only a quarter of small employers

Table 4:2 Existence of education policies, managers and budgets

	Percentage of respondents with a:		
Size of employer (no. of employees)	**Policy**	**Manager**	**Budget**
0 to 24	25.3	60.6	6.9
25 to 99	24.7	55.4	3.5
100 to 299	31.4	63.1	11.0
300 to 999	33.3	68.0	11.9
1000+	46.2	55.3	24.7
All	31.7	60.4	11.2
N =	*1,119*	*1,124*	*1,121*

Whole involved sample

Source: IES survey, 1995

A company education policy: example

The company will contribute to and participate in, those programmes and events which enable students to become better prepared for the world of further education and adult work.

This is compatible with our corporate staffing goal which is 'to identify, attract and select highly capable, innovative people for all levels of employment throughout the company. Success in this endeavour will help ensure our continued growth and financial well-being in an increasingly competitive market place.'

The company is committed to the practice of equal opportunity in the community, working with people irrespective of ethnic background, sex or any physical disability.

School links criteria

- Establishments should have a sixth form and promote a pre-university year in industry.
- Schools situated within . . . (as defined by the Local Education Authority) or exceptionally, other schools with a girls-only studentship, a statistically high ethnic population, special needs establishment, or those schools considered to offer a progressive science curriculum.
- An annual goal that a minimum 30 per cent of participants in events, students or teachers, should be female.

have a policy, but this rises to around a third of the medium to large organisations and almost a half of the big employers with over 1,000 employees.

Public sector organisations were almost twice as likely as those in the private sector to have a policy and 38 per cent service sector respondents said that they had a formal policy compared with only 25 per cent of production companies.

Employers with links to an EBP were more likely to have a formal policy towards education. Looking just at the random sample, 40.2 per cent of those connected to an EBP said they had a policy compared with only 16.6 per cent of those who were not.

In the interviews we were interested to investigate such policies further and we found that:

- they were generally unwritten
- they were generally linked to a mission statement, values statement or 'corporate culture' about serving the community.

For example, one company had developed five objectives in support of a drive towards higher quality. One involved the development of 'outstanding people' and another encompassed 'good citizenship'. These were seen as forming the policy context for education links.

A company education policy: example

One engineering company with 300 employees had a very strong commitment to working with education, as exemplified by the following extracts from its education and training policy.

- The company wishes to maintain close liaison with local schools and encourage visits by staff and students. Work experience for short periods will be offered to students through schools and the Trident Trust. The company will be an active member of the [. . .] Education-Business Partnership.
- The directors will agree to sponsor a selected number of students studying for an appropriate degree at University and offer work experience during the course and vacation.
- Managers and other employees are encouraged to offer their services as members of schools governing bodies and parent teacher associations.

In small companies, without formal mission statements *etc.*, the policies were generally embodied within the philosophy of the managing director or proprietor.

In one case, the company policy is based on an 'aims and beliefs' statement, which includes statements about 'putting something back into the local community', as well as developing high quality staff. Within this context, the company has developed a set of criteria by which its contribution to education is determined. The criteria include:

- the activity should fit within the sector in which the company operates (*ie* technology and electronics)
- activities should focus on areas where the company has a site
- contribution must not include the cost of buildings or other 'core' costs
- there should be a demonstrable and direct benefit to young people.

4.2.1 Policy developments

In a number of cases, policies were in the process of being revamped. In one example, the company was looking to adopt a more proactive stance within the context of a new policy. Individual managers would be expected to operate within the policy but the precise nature, delivery and quality of the links would be up to them. The draft policy covers three grades of involvement:

- **Partnership** — formal links with schools and colleges. These institutions will be priority for things like work experience.
- **Link** — similar to the above but at a lower level without the same priority or depth of involvement.

- **Contact** — *ad hoc* activities which the company will participate in on a responsive basis. These are generally initiated by agencies such as an EBP. At the time of meeting, the extent to which the company would continue to be involved at this level was not certain.

In another case, a brewery was also revising its policy and adopting a more proactive stance. This may lead, according to our respondent, to some schools missing out as links become more targeted and focused on the local area. One of the results of the development of the policy is that links would become less dependent on the motivations of a few individuals and more integrated across the company as a whole.

A third example involved an engineering company that was currently developing a Partnership Centre along the lines of the Rover model in the Midlands. This is a demonstration of the change within the company from a largely responsive policy to a more proactive stance which will also guarantee 'longevity, continuity and consistency'.

Yet another company was seeking to adopt a more proactive stance by developing the notion of two-way service agreements with schools, in which both parties specify what they put in and what they expect out of partnership.

A fifth example concerns a large leisure services company that is currently rewriting its partnership policy. They have a concern that although a lot of 'good work' is done at local level, and schools and local businesses have been pleased with the commitment, there is a feeling at the centre that they should be having more of an impact on national education policy and the longer-term aspects of education. At the moment the many activities in which they get involved are seen as 'add ons' and they would like this to go deeper and become more integrated. This will mean:

> *'A more common approach to involvement with education in the future, with greater dissemination and pulling together of ideas.'*

4.2.2 The value of a policy

Some major companies with a high level of links with education or what they described as a proactive stance, did not have formal policies and were not about to develop one. A representative of a major retail chain said:

> *'The company does not have policies on anything. They tend to be bureaucratic. We can do what we like as long as profitability of the store is maintained.'*

A number of small companies took a similar attitude, arguing that it was not in their nature to 'have policies as such'.

The existence of a policy can be seen more as a statement of commitment. All respondents we followed up who had said on their questionnaire that they did have a policy, whether it turned out to be written or not, confirmed that their organisation had a thought-out commitment towards links with education. This meant that they generally had a good idea about what they wanted to do, with whom and why.

To an extent, it also meant that partnership activity was more ingrained within the organisation. Thus, although personnel might change, and therefore the nature and focus of the links might change, the overall positive attitude towards education links would not.

However, the existence of a policy was not a guarantee of continuity. This was especially true in three sets of cases. First, where the policy was set at head office and delivery concentrated at local level, but the devolved responsibility was not monitored. Continuity here tended to rest on the willingness of a few key individuals. For example, one personnel and training manager in a major hotel chain said:

> *'If I left, I expect the links would stop almost over night.'*

Second, a similar set of circumstances exists in small companies where it is the enthusiasm of one or two key personnel, often the owner, that drives the links with education forward. A change of personnel or ownership would probably lead to a completely different outlook.

Finally, in some cases the policy could be seen as nominal, with little influence on practice. This was the case in a couple of the larger companies we visited, where the policy was set at Head Office, but not carried through on the ground. In one Scottish-based financial services company, a branch representative told us that:

> *'I know the name of the Education Links Officer in Scotland, but in 26 years I have never met him.'*

Perhaps as a result the branch was 'only involved in a small way'.

4.3 Management of education links

Most employers have one person responsible for managing or co-ordinating links with education, according to our survey. Across the sample, 60.4 per cent of employers said that they had one person looking after their links with education. As Table 4:2 shows, their existence varies little by size of organisation and there was also little variation by sector.

Responsibility for education links falls most commonly within the remit of the personnel department. Table 4:3 sets out the

Table 4:3 Job titles of people managing links with education

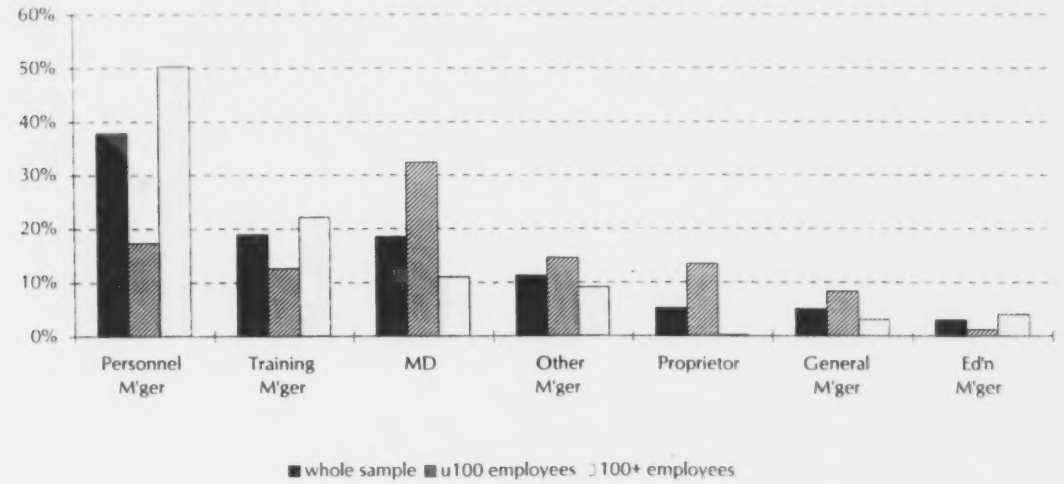
Job Title	Proportion of respondents
Personnel director/manager (or equivalent)	37.9
Training director/manager (or equivalent)	19.0
Managing director (or equivalent)	18.6
Other manager (including production manager, company secretary etc.)	11.3
Owner/proprietor	5.2
General manager (or equivalent)	5.0
Education manager	3.0
N = 705	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

most common job titles. Over a third of the employers in our sample said that responsibility for education links lay with their personnel director or manager or someone with an equivalent job title. A further 19 per cent placed education links under the wing of their training department. Thus, in well over half the sample, liaison with education is considered a human resource issue.

However, responsibility does vary with size of company. In larger companies, education links tend to fall under the wing of the personnel or training department. In smaller companies, they tend to be a more general management responsibility. Figure 4:2 shows the responses broken down between smaller employers (with under 100 employees) and larger ones (with

Figure 4:2 Job titles of people managing links with education



Source: IES survey, 1995

over 100 employees). The size bands have been selected not only for ease of presentation but also because it appears to be the threshold at which responsibility switches from general management (*ie* managing director, owner, or some other manager) to the personnel department. This would obviously appear to be associated with the existence of personnel or human resources as a separate department within the organisation.

However, there is not a complete discontinuity at this point. For instance, in 45.8 per cent of our smaller firms responsibility lies with the managing director or owner/proprietor, compared with almost 12 per cent of larger firms. Even in the 1,000 employees plus category, responsibility falls within the remit of the managing director in 3.6 per cent of cases, indicating the importance in these cases at least with which links with education are regarded.

4.4 Budgets and resources

As shown in Table 4:2 above, around 11 per cent of the employers in our sample had a formal budget to cover expenditure on their links with education, although this figure rose to a quarter of the largest employers in the sample. Public sector and service sector employers were more inclined to have a formal budget than those in the private sector and production sector.

Fewer employers with links from the random sample had budgets than those from the EBP sample. Within the random sample, employers with links with an EBP were twice as likely as those with no links to have a budget for education activities (although the numbers, 40, are fairly small and so the data should be treated with caution.)

Where there was not a separate budget for education links, any money that was required, generally seemed to come out of training or marketing budgets, or in some cases both. Indeed, the overall heading of the budget (*ie* marketing or training) could be seen as an indicator of the rationale underlying an organisation's involvement with education.

In one company, we were told that 'the budget is what you can collar out of each department'. Although most came from the education and training budget, some came from marketing.

At the top end of the spectrum, a major leisure company had a series of regional education managers each with a budget of around £15,000 to spend on printing, publishing, occasional donations, coaches *etc*. A few of the other larger employers in the sample had overall budgets (excluding staff time) of between £35,000 and £50,000 a year.

Table 4:4 Main resources involved in education links

Type of resource	Proportion of respondents
Staff time	97.5
Use of premises	62.6
Use of equipment	46.5
Donations of cash	16.1
Donations of equipment	13.7
N = 1,152 (multiple responses allowed)	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

Staff time is the main resource that nearly every employer provides (see Table 4:4). Many also lend out premises or equipment. Donations of cash or equipment are far less common, according to the survey. Larger organisations were far more likely than smaller ones to make donations. For example, 28 per cent of employers with a 1,000 or more employees said they donated cash and 22.6 per cent said they gave out equipment, compared with less than ten per cent of organisations with under 100 employees.

One company that currently did donate money was expecting to reduce the level of its donations in the future as it was thought to lead to little impact.

Some 11.7 per cent of the whole involved sample said that they quantified the resources provided — about the same percentage as said they had a budget. So, in the vast majority of cases, the costs employers incur, including staff time, are unaccounted for.

In nearly all these cases, we obtained details of the staff time and/or the monetary donations involved for the 1994 calendar year. However, reflecting the nature of involvement, we had over twice as many respondents providing us with details of the staff time involved (127) as told us the amount of money they donated (53).

To adjust for the size of the organisation, we have divided both the amount given in donations and the staff time by the number of people employed, to give a 'per head' figure.

The mean amount in donations is £74.72. However, this figure is distorted by a few small companies saying that they gave relatively large donations last year. For instance, one company with ten employees gave £20,000, *ie* £2,000 a head. Another with six, gave £3,000, *ie* £500 a head. Excluding the first generous respondent reduces the mean figure by half to £36.26. Perhaps a more accurate measurement of the average is the median, which comes out at £7.04 a head.

Similarly, the calculation of the average hours per head per year devoted to education business link activity is distorted by a few enthusiastic small firms — particularly one with nine employees who reckoned to have spent 900 hours (two hours per person per week) on education business link activity in 1994. The mean figure, including this case, was 6.6 hours per person a year and the median was 0.73 hours per person per year.

4.5 Evaluation

Just under a fifth of the sample (18.6 per cent) conducted formal assessments of the links they had with education. Evaluation was twice as common among the largest companies (*ie* those with at least 1,000 employees) than in any of the other size bands, and was also more common among public sector and service sector organisations.

Where there is no formal evaluation, employers tend to rely heavily on schools and colleges to provide them with feedback. A number made comments along the lines that 'if schools keep coming back for more then it must be all right'.

However, some employers recognised the short-comings of this approach. The training manager of a large engineering firm planning for a major expansion in education activities over the coming years said:

> *'I would like to be a little more confident that what is being done is what people want and that it is most useful — to assume it is valuable just because people come back is a little weak.'*

In cases where the employer did conduct some form of evaluation it tended to:

a) centre on the value to the participant rather than the employer, and

b) concentrate on assessing whether the activity was conducted well rather than judging whether it was worth doing in the first place. In other words, the emphasis is on process rather than outcome evaluation.

For instance, one engineering company that took its involvement with education very seriously said:

> *'We don't just do it and hope for the best. All activities are discussed with the schools beforehand and we conduct assessments afterwards, including collecting the views of students and teachers. However, formal evaluation is very difficult and in the main, if the teachers and schools are happy with what has been achieved, then the company is too.'*

A bank which has recently launched a major initiative in schools said that each activity within the overall programme was

monitored, with forms to be completed by the students at each stage and the results fed back to the school.

> *'In our view, if the school or the students think something has gone well, then we consider it to be successful.'*

In some cases, we were told that adequate feedback from schools was not always forthcoming.

However, there were signs that this might be changing. For example, one company set realistic targets at the beginning of each activity:

> *'. . . so that outcomes can be monitored and the impact on the company assessed.'*

In one company we were told:

> *'In the past, evaluation was a fairly informal affair, based on feedback from the parties involved. With our new policy, this is likely to change as the directors want a far more measured contribution. This is likely to mean finding out what staff have achieved and learned from the experience, and linking this into articulated objectives and outcomes, including the commitment of the company to Investors in People.'*

4.5.1 Value to the employer

Far fewer employers assessed the value of education links to themselves. One company conducted a survey to look at the impact of their activities on schools and see if those that had been involved showed a greater level of awareness and a better understanding of the company.

One company we went to had invested significant sums over the years in working with education. The education manager we talked to had calculated that only 0.6 per cent of the parents of the children that had been involved with his company had to buy the company's product for its investment to be recouped.

4.6 Conclusion

It is clear from the above sections that some employers adopt a generally different stance towards education business links than others. On the one hand there are those who take part because they are asked, it does not take up much time, it is a nice thing to do and there may be some form of direct or indirect payback, but that is not the primary motive. On the other hand there are employers who have adopted a more commercial attitude to the whole process, they have a clear idea of why they are involved, the benefits they are looking for, the sort of activities in which they wish to participate, and how they will go about doing so.

We have examined the different employer approaches closely and drawn a clearer distinction between these two groups:

- those who seek take the initiative and adopt *a systematic and proactive approach*, and
- those who adopt a more responsive or *ad hoc approach*.

4.6.1 Systematic proactive employers

The key distinguishing features of this group are that they say they adopt a proactive stance, and/or have a policy on education links and/or a budget to back up their involvement. Around a fifth of the sample fall into this category.

In comparison to the rest of the respondents, these employers tend to:

- put forward a wider range of reasons for getting involved with education.
- be more likely to get involved with a particular partnership activity — for instance they are twice as likely to provide teacher placements and over three times as likely to take up an employer placement in a school.
- get involved in activities to a greater extent (*ie* provide more work experience placements *etc.*).
- get involved in different types of activities.
- achieve a higher level of success with the activities in which they participate — particularly with teacher placements and school visits.
- be more likely to get involved with a particular type of institution — for instance they are twice as likely to link up with a primary school and over three times as likely to link up with a special or independent school.
- get involved with institutions to a greater extent (*ie* link up with more secondary schools *etc.*).
- get involved in a wider range of institutions.

In other words, these employers want more, do more and get more out of what they do.

Although this group are more likely to be involved with third party agencies (such as an EBP — see Chapter 5), they are not particularly reliant on others for their involvement and tend to run to their own agenda.

All sizes of employers appear in this group. Although the larger employers are disproportionately represented, almost 30 per cent have less than 100 employees. These employers are more likely to be part of the service sector — indeed two-thirds of these proactive employers are from the service sector and only one-third from the production sector. Public sector organisations are also over-represented.

We can further delineate a sub-group of 'super-proactive' employers comprising about five per cent of the whole sample and about a quarter of the proactive group. These employers could be seen as combining a whole-hearted enthusiasm for partnership activity with a very level-headed approach. In the survey these employers say they adopt a proactive stance, *and* have an education policy *and* a designated manager *and* a budget to back it up. This group is again not confined to large employers, although proportionally fewer small employers fit the bill. Public sector and service sector are also more likely to appear in this group.

4.6.2 Employers with a more *ad hoc* approach

The other group, the remaining 80 per cent tend to be far more responsive, relying on schools and education to set the agenda, and more reliant on third parties to engage them in links and to help them maximise the value of them.

In comparison to the first group, these employers do not have the same vision about their involvement with education. This may be because other issues, particularly the health of the business, have a higher priority or, more generally, they are less committed to the principle of partnership. As a result they have not built up the internal systems to manage their participation and therefore their involvement is on a smaller scale.

4.6.3 Trends

It is difficult from the data available to determine whether the proactive group is growing or contracting. However we did encounter a number of employers who are looking to adopt a more systematic approach towards their links with education to ensure that they maximise the business benefits available. This is likely to alter their practice with regard to the activities in which they participate and the partners with which they link up.

5. The Role of Agencies

5.1 Introduction

The survey asked for information about respondents awareness of a range of organisations and agencies that forge links between education and business. The results are presented in Table 5:1 and show that apart from the TEC, which has almost universal recognition, the two most commonly recognised bodies were Young Enterprise and the Education Business Partnership.[1]

Nearly half of the whole involved sample had heard of the Teacher Placement Service and Compact, and a third of Project Trident (which is now called Trident Trust).

Table 5:1 Awareness of education link agencies

Agency	Percentage of respondents by size (in terms of number of employees)			
	Under 100	100 to 299	300 or more	All
Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)	88.3	96.0	97.2	94.6
Young Enterprise	52.8	54.5	70.6	60.9
Education Business Partnership (EBP)	46.3	56.0	73.1	59.6
Teacher Placement Service (TPS)	36.3	47.6	66.5	50.2
Compact	33.9	45.5	65.5	48.8
Project Trident	25.5	31.3	44.7	35.2
School Curriculum Industry Partnership (SCIP)	15.8	20.4	29.9	22.6
Science and Technology Regional Organisation (SaTRO)	8.4	12.0	22.1	14.3
Neighbourhood Engineers	7.0	8.0	21.8	12.5
Education Strategic Forum	3.6	6.2	10.2	6.8
N =	*443*	*275*	*394*	*1,138*
Whole involved sample				

Source: IES survey, 1995

[1] There is some evidence from the interviews and other research we have conducted that the figure for awareness of EBPs may be an underestimate as a number will be better known by their local name which may have no mention of the phrase 'education business partnership'.

As the data in Table 5:1 show, recognition generally rises with size of organisation, with larger employers (with over 300 employees) generally more aware than medium size or smaller ones.

Public sector organisations are generally more aware of partnership agencies than private sector ones. Companies in the production sector are more likely to have heard of sector-based agencies such as Neighbourhood Engineers than service sector organisations.

5.2 Education Business Partnerships

Well over a third of the sample (38 per cent) had links with their local EBP. This is surprisingly low considering that half the achieved sample came from EBP databases. In fact only 52.5 per cent of the EBP sample said that they had any links with an EBP compared with 19.6 per cent of the (unweighted) random sample.

Although, as we have learned by now to expect, larger companies are much more likely than the others to have links with an EBP (*eg* 57 per cent of those with over 1,000 employees said they had links), the smallest firms were more likely than middle-sized employers to say they had a connection with an EBP. Some 35.6 per cent of employers with under 25 employees said that they had links compared with under 30 per cent (29.5 per cent) of organisation with between 25 and 299 employees. This is more likely to reflect a bias either in our original sampling or in the response from small employers (*ie* those involved with the EBP were probably more likely to respond than those that were not) rather than any major penetration of the small business sector by the EBP movement.

Six out of ten public sector organisations in the sample said that they had links with their EBP compared with only 35 per cent of private sector companies.

In comparison to other employers, those involved with EBPs tend to be:

- involved in a wider range of activities (Section 3.1)
- involved with a wider range of partners (Section 3.2)
- more inclined to adopt a proactive approach (Section 4.6)

5.2.1 Form of involvement

We asked those respondents who said that they have links with an EBP for details of their involvement (see Table 5:2) Four out of five said that their name was on a database and most received a newsletter and took part in EBP organised events and activities. Just under half said that their commitment had been

Table 5:2 Form of involvement with EBP

Type of involvement	Proportion of respondents
Name on database	79.4
Receive newsletter	72.2
Take part in activities	68.3
Become a member or official partner	47.5
Involved in sub-committees	28.6
Sit on executive board	19.0
N = 441 (multiple responses allowed)	
Whole involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

recognised through some form of membership of partnership scheme in which they had enrolled.

Almost 30 per cent of the respondents were formally involved in either a main committee or executive board of the EBP, or sat on a sub-committee.

5.2.2 Employers' views of EBPs

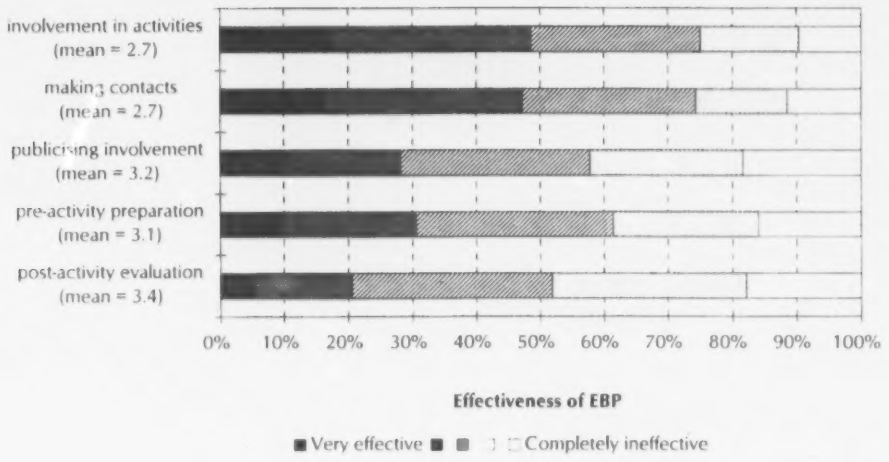
Our respondents generally thought that EBPs were much better at acting as facilitators as opposed to helping with preparation, publicity or evaluation. We asked respondents to rate the effectiveness of their local EBP in five areas, on a scale of one to five (with one being very effective and five being completely ineffective). The areas were helping the employer to:

- get involved in link activities
- get in touch with schools and colleges
- prepare for their involvement with schools and colleges
- evaluate the link activities in which they had been involved
- publicise the successful activities in which they had been involved.

The results are presented in graphical form in Figure 5:1.

Nearly half the sample thought that EBPs were effective (*ie* a rating of one or two) at getting employers involved in activities and putting them in touch with schools and colleges. Around 40 per cent were also positive about EBPs helping employers to prepare for partnership activities or publicising successful events. Only around a quarter rated EBPs as effective on evaluation.

Figure 5: 1 Effectiveness of EBP in helping employers with their involvement with education



Source: IES survey, 1995

It would appear that, in general, the more proactive a company, the more involved it tends to become with an EBP, in terms of sitting on committees and taking part in activities *etc.* Perhaps because of this level of involvement, employers with a systematic and proactive approach (as defined in Section 4.6) tend to rate their EBP as more effective. This is despite the fact that in some ways, because of their more managed approach they get less value from an EBP compared with those that adopt a more *ad hoc* approach.

This has led some of the most proactive organisations we visited to criticise EBPs in the following ways:

> *'We support activities when asked and contribute to the brochure but don't rely on the EBP for help in initiating or setting up links.'*
>
> *'The EBP does not add much. We do what we would do anyway.'*
>
> *'They keep asking the company to do more, despite the fact we do more than anyone else already.'*

Further evidence that the most proactive employers have less need of the type of intervention offered by EBPs came from companies that were revamping their approach and/or policy to education business links. For instance, one company which was revising its policy towards a more proactive outlook felt that this might take it away from the EBP as the EBP was thought to rely on the company's willingness to react to its suggestions. Another saw the amount of work they did within the EBP diminishing as they sought to build up more one-to-one links with schools.

However, that does not mean to say that these employers do not appreciate the value that EBPs can bring to the community as a whole. Some employers argued that EBPs should focus their attention on the less involved employers and on education:

'We're of far more use to them than they are to us. They should spend more time trying to get new people involved and trying to help small companies, not those already on board.'

'The EBP has made no impact whatsoever on the level of our involvement but has been a useful source of advice, support and information. That said I think it is of more use to schools in this way than employers.'

'I've asked our local EBP not to push us, but to spend their time with the schools and colleges. They are the ones that need attention, so that they plan more in advance.'

'I would like to see the EBP targeting who they promote themselves to, not just concentrating on those already involved.'

The conclusion we draw from this is that the more proactive employers recognise that they are in a position to play a 'leadership' role in the world of education business links. This means working with EBPs and others to develop local strategies and encourage greater business involvement. While they will support EBP sponsored activity these employers tend to argue that EBPs should look further afield and attract new employers or encourage greater participation from those more tentatively involved.

5.2.3 Further points on EBPs

We encountered some other, more specific, criticisms, including:

- EBPs were too dominated by education.
- EBPs 'spend too much time talking and not enough doing'.
- EBPs spend too little time on co-ordination and making education less inflexible.

On the other hand, most employers who expressed a view were less critical altogether and felt that EBPs had a valuable role to play. One major company, without a policy but with a generally supportive attitude towards education links argued that:

'The EBP saves us a lot of time. It acts as a filter and brings a balanced perspective to education links so that they do not become dominated by one side or the other. It also helps to prioritise things so that the main needs of education are met by business. If the EBP did not exist there would be an additional drain on resources and something would have to give.'

Others added:

'EBPs are good at generating ideas, focusing needs, channelling requests and organising events efficiently.'

'The EBP acts as a useful catalyst, without them many things would not happen.'

'Most people need some prodding to get involved and if there wasn't the encouragement from the EBP the volume of activities would tail off.'

'EBPs are essential to bring teachers out from hiding behind the problems and pressures of National Curriculum and OFSTED.'

'The EBP is good at: organising schools and pulling the right people together.'

Very few took the totally negative view of EBPs expressed by the following director of a small business:

'It's always a waste of funds when third party organisations are set up specially to bring two parties together. Education authorities should train headteachers to motivate them to contact local businesses.'

5.3 Conclusion

The balance of the evidence from this research is that, by and large, employers appreciate the added value that EBPs bring to education business link activity.

However, there is more work still to be done. For instance, one company that was not involved with education at the moment, told us that, in his view, there were too many bodies and organisations involved with the same objectives. It was his understanding that Business Link was supposed to present a more unified front and he welcomed this. Two others reinvented the EBP wheel by suggesting setting up bodies to facilitate greater employer involvement (see Section 6.2). There is, therefore, still a lack of awareness about the existence of EBPs and the role they play.

Another theme to emerge from the research is that the more proactive employers have less need of the services offered by EBPs. Indeed, many resent the attentions heaped on them by EBPs, arguing that they should concentrate on less-involved employers and schools. As employers adopt a more business-like approach to education links and focus on particular objectives, activities or partners, their need for EBPs as facilitators may diminish. However, they are generally still willing to be involved in a management capacity acting as an advisor on a committee or an advocate at a presentation.

6. Non-involvement

So far in this report, we have concentrated on the albeit vast majority of employers in our survey who have some form of involvement with education. But what about those who are not involved? In this chapter we look at their characteristics, the reasons why they are not involved and what could be done to attract them into the partnership fold.

Around 46 per cent of our reweighted random sample said that they had not had any links with education over the past two years. Taking account of our response bias we estimate the true figure to be around two-thirds of employers with at least five employees are not involved. Nearly all those who were not involved (83.3 per cent) were smaller employers (with less than 100 employees) from the private sector.

The rest of the data in this chapter are drawn from the employers who said they were not involved with links from both the EBP and the random samples to form a whole not-involved sample.

6.1 Reasons for non-involvement

The key reasons why the employers in our survey did not get involved with education were that they:

- did not have the time
- could not see the value
- lacked awareness.

Underpinning at least the first two reasons is the feeling that education business links are not a life-sustaining activity. In the competitive environment in which most respondent operate, energy is generally expended on either building up the business or ensuring its survival. The recent CEI study also found that lack of time and staff along with 'difficult trading circumstances' were major barriers to involvement in partnership activity.[1]

[1] Miller A *et al.*, 1995, *Making Education our Business*, Employment Department.

6.1.1 Lack of time

The main reason given was the 'lack of time'. Nearly 70 per cent of our not-involved sample listed this as a reason (see Table 6:1) and 46.5 per cent said it was the most important reason. For some, this may be a temporary problem. For instance, one company we contacted said that they were 'struggling to survive at the moment'. While they could see the importance of employers linking with education, they currently had more pressing priorities as they were 'walking on thin ice.'

Others felt this was a more long-term constraint, including those who were concerned about the time necessary to plan and carry out activities. Small companies, in particular, felt that such activities would be difficult for them to organise without a 'disproportionate amount of effort'.

For instance, we were told by the manager of a software manufacturer, with 40 staff:

> *'We haven't got enough staff to cope with students on placements and the like.'*

The Durham University Business School, in their work with small businesses and education links, similarly found that time was a costly resource for small companies and acted as a major constraint to involvement.[1] They also point to the 'widespread confusion and uncertainty (among small firms) about the why, what and how of partnerships, and the lack of confidence this inspires'. This might lead some non-participants to over-estimate the time intensity of link activity, especially as the average level of involvement is only a few hours a year (Section 4.4). Unfortunately, we did not have the opportunity to test this assertion.

6.1.2 Lack of value

However, a significant proportion (41.9 per cent) did not see the value for their organisation in getting involved in partnership activities, and 29.1 per cent said this was the most important reason for their non-involvement.

One small company we visited had only nine staff. The respondent saw education business links as a means of recruitment, and labour turnover levels were low. Such links were therefore not seen as relevant. Others similarly argued that they did not employ young people and so they did not see the relevance of links either. One said that he thought education

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[1] Enterprise and Education Unit, Durham University Business School, *A study of small and medium sized enterprise partnerships with education on Teesside*, draft report.

Table 6:1 Why employers do get involved with education

Reason for non-involvement	Proportion of respondents
No time to get involved	69.1
See no value in getting involved	41.9
Would like to get involved, but do not know how	16.2
Did not realise it was possible to get involved	16.2
No personal interest in getting involved	13.1
N = 191 (multiple responses allowed)	
Whole not-involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

business links to be the province of 'big industry' employing 'loads of school and college leavers'.

Even some of those who could see long-term benefits from a closer relationship between education and business, could 'not see any short or medium term advantages in it for us'.

There seems little personal antipathy towards getting involved, with only 13.1 per cent saying that they had no personal interest.

6.1.3 Lack of awareness

The third reason was that companies did not realise that it was possible to form links with education and/or would like to but did not know how. In the survey, 16.2 per cent said that they would like to become involved but did not know how to go about it and 11.0 per cent listed this as the most important reason. A further 16.2 per cent said that they did not realise it was possible to get involved. For example, one manager of a small business said to us:

> *'I wasn't aware that these things went on. Your questionnaire was the first I heard about any of this stuff; we've never been approached by the TEC or anyone.'*

However, it was among the few big companies that were not involved that this reason figured most strongly. The Personnel Manager of a housing association, for example, employing 550 people in the Midlands said that they did not have a policy of non-involvement it was just that:

> *'. . . we haven't been asked. I can see the value of getting young people interested in housing as a career. It is just that we've never been approached as a company or personally.'*

Other reasons that emerged in the interviews were:

- A perception that an employer was inappropriate to be involved — this included small companies, those involved in

'unattractive' industries, such as the abattoir we contacted where we were told that they were 'keeping a low profile at the moment', and a factory involved in applying polymer coatings to metal components.

- Other related priorities: two of the interviewees had recently decided to become involved in Youth Training and saw this as a somewhat larger-scale involvement with young people than education links.
- A poor experience in the past. The manager of a chain of shoe shops told us:

  'We used to be involved with a school but it was not a success. Most of the pupils didn't turn up and those that did weren't interested in retailing.'

6.2 Potential for future involvement

The potential for getting more employers involved is indicated by the fact that 29.8 per cent said that they would be interested in getting more involved at some point in the future. Some 38.7 per cent would not and 29.3 per cent did not know.

Among those who indicated that they might be interested in getting involved in the future, there were three types of respondents:

- those who had always wanted to be involved but had not got around to it
- those who were constrained in the past but the constraints had gone or were diminishing
- those for whom links with education were now a higher priority.

For example, one respondent saw the re-emergence of skill shortages, especially in the information technology and accountancy areas, as a potentially major problem 'in the near future' and that a closer relationship with education:

'. . . could be a way of helping with any recruitment problems we may encounter.'

Those who indicated that they would be interested in becoming involved in the future appeared to fall into two main camps:

- companies that are emerging from a period of recession-induced retrenchment, and now looking to either open up their recruitment channels or broaden their horizons more generally by embracing more community-based activities, or
- those who have grown rapidly in recent years and now feel either the need, or that they have the capacity, to get involved.

Table 6:2 What could be done to secure greater involvement

Reason for non-involvement	Proportion of respondents
More information/better explanation of benefits	63.9
Financial support	24.6
More resources (people, time etc.)	13.1
Direct contact from schools	9.8
Other	21.3
N = 61 (multiple responses allowed)	
Whole not-involved sample	

Source: IES survey, 1995

While those in the first group may have been involved at some point in the past, the second group tend to have little history of involvement with schools.

> *'As a relatively young company, little time has been available to direct towards non-productive activities. But as time goes on and our internal infrastructure develops, we would hope to be in a position to forge links with education. I can certainly see the benefit to the wider world of a better trained workforce.'*

6.3 Overcoming the constraints

We asked what could be done, if anything, to encourage involvement. The responses are listed in Table 6:2.

In most cases, the solutions lie outside the employers' domain and with education itself and the agencies promoting links. Certainly, among the interviewees there was a feeling of ignorance about what they could do and therefore more information would be of benefit. The following comments were typical:

> *'More publicity and information needs to be supplied to all employers about these activities.'*
>
> *'These initiatives need to be marketed better.'*
>
> *'There needs to be better communication between education and employers to make it easier for us.'*
>
> *'We need to know where to go for information.'*

In a similar vein, the other solutions put forward by our respondents tended to fall under the heading of a clearer articulation of the benefits to business, as the following comments illustrate:

> *'More information is needed on the benefits for companies getting involved at an earlier stage.'*

'There needs to be better communication of the benefits to small businesses.'

'More feedback on success in the past.'

'You must ensure short and medium-term benefits to both parties in order to meet the long-term aims.'

'I need to be convinced of the nature of the benefits, as I am sceptical at the moment.'

The potential benefits for education business links of providing more information to employers was demonstrated by a small manufacturing company in a rural area.

'We'd be interested in principle and would be willing to put in time and money but we don't have enough information to go on as yet.'

In another case, a small soft furnishing retailers with seven full-time and nine part-time staff said that:

'Although time and money are major constraints, we could always find the time, no matter how busy we were, if we could see benefit in it.'

Around a third of our respondents suggested they needed financial support from outside, or to generate the internal capacity to release more staff time before they could get involved in partnership activities.

In the interviews, few respondents recalled being approached by either schools or some form of partnership agency to become involved and nearly ten per cent suggested that a direct contact from a school or college was all it needed to secure their participation. One respondent suggested setting up:

'. . . local bodies to develop education business links and to provide information to new businesses.'

Another had a similar suggestion:

'It needs greater facilitation by a central organisation, developed on a regional basis. TECs could put the programmes together, but they need managing. My experience is that there is little management expertise in this area. It needs somebody to facilitate, preferably with short-term objectives and outcomes.'

Obviously, in these areas, the EBP had yet to make a significant impact on these particular respondents, although in both cases, when prompted, they were aware of its existence.

Some employers felt that schools had to be more open to working with industry and there was a feeling that commercialism was frowned upon by some schools. This suggests that in a number of cases, employers need convincing that education itself sees the value in links with business.

6.4 Conclusion

The research suggests that there are three broad reasons why employers do not get involved in links with education:

- first, there are those who see no value in getting involved in the first place
- secondly, there are those that would get involved but are constrained from doing so, either through internal factors — particularly among smaller businesses, the lack of time for such 'non-productive activities', and
- thirdly, there are employers who are constrained by external factors — such as lack of awareness or contact from education.

The solutions to these constraints tend to revolve around three themes:

- first, active promotion of the opportunities available, to overcome the lack of awareness
- second, providing a clear statement of the value to employers of getting involved in education business links — as one of the respondents put it, 'we could always find the time, no matter how busy we were, if we could see benefit in it'. This suggests that the way to overcome the internal constraint of lack of time is to convince employers of the advantages they could reap from participating in partnership activity or demonstrate that it is not as time-intensive as they fear. Nevertheless it is clear that for many employers, education business links will always be viewed as a marginal activity.
- third, making it as simple as possible for employers to become involved — this may be through third parties, as some of our respondents volunteered, or through direct contact from schools and colleges. Small companies especially are resistant to becoming involved in any activities they fear might be bureaucratic.

7. Involvement in the Future

In this chapter, we return to look at our whole involved sample to examine the likely future trends for employer participation in link activity.

Most employers in the whole involved sample expect their involvement to continue at the same level as now. Under five per cent say that they expect their involvement to diminish. One enthusiast told us that:

> *'Nothing short of a business collapse would stop us getting more involved!'*

Around a third of our involved respondents indicated that they saw themselves becoming more involved with education in the future. Most of these (25.1 per cent of the total) said they felt that they would become involved in a wider range of links, while some (7.1 per cent of the total) were planning to be more involved in a narrower range of links. It is the larger employers that appear to be keener to adopt the more focused approach.

For example, one chain of department stores expected to increase their involvement, but through focusing more on teacher placement and work experience, thought to be the most beneficial activities for both sides. Another company said they would like to subject their activities to more evaluation and give a higher profile to a select number of activities.

Table 7:1 Future levels of involvement

	Percentage of respondents by size (in terms of number of employees)			
	Under 100	**100 to 299**	**300 or more**	**All**
More involved in a wider range of links	20.3	29.7	27.3	25.1
More involved but in a narrower range of links	4.6	6.0	11.1	7.2
About the same as now	71.5	62.9	56.4	64.1
Less involved than now	3.5	1.4	5.2	3.6
N = 1,124 (multiple responses allowed)				
Whole involved sample				

Source: IES survey, 1995

Table 7:2 Factors affecting levels of involvement

	Percentage of respondents by size		
	Definite influence	**Possible influence**	**Unlikely influence**
The amount of staff time available	67.5	26.0	6.5
The amount of finance available	42.6	36.0	21.4
Clearly identified business benefits	42.2	42.4	15.3
Better systems for linking with education	34.0	49.8	16.3
N = 1,101			
Whole involved sample			

Source: IES survey, 1995

There is little sectoral variation in the pattern of future involvement, except that the public sector organisations are slightly more inclined than those in the private sector to say that their involvement will expand.

Employers in the random sample who had links with an EBP, were slightly more likely than those without links to forecast that their involvement would increase — particularly by becoming more focused on fewer activities rather than increasing their involvement across a wider range of links.

A key delineating factor was the overall approach an employer adopted. Nearly half those with a systematic and proactive approach (as defined in Section 4.6) felt that their involvement would increase, compared with 29 per cent of the employers who adopted a more *ad hoc* attitude.

7.1 Limiting factors

As with the employers who are not involved at all, the key constraint limiting future involvement appears to be the amount of staff time available. Table 7:2 looks at the most important factors that are likely to influence employers' involvement with education and whether it was definite, possible or unlikely that they would exert an influence.

The table shows that two-thirds of our respondents thought that the amount of available staff time would definitely influence their involvement with education, for example:

> *'More involvement would be possible with a larger staff. We've now got fewer staff because of the recession and this does not allow for sufficient free time.'*

Finance was less crucial, but still important, (which matches up with our earlier finding that cash donations was not a major form of provision, Section 4.4), although more people listed the articulation of clearly identified business benefits as a definite or possible influencing factor.

Improvement in systems to make it easier to link with education was seen as a definite influence by just over a third of our sample and again we had a few suggestions from employers about setting up EBP-like agencies to, for instance, 'focus the approach of the numerous organisations forging links'.

Employers not involved with an EBP were more likely to be influenced by seeing clearer business benefits than the others. This could suggest that EBPs already play a role in meeting this demand, or it could merely mean that those involved with EBPs are less 'hard-nosed' about their participation.

To a minority of employers, their future involvement depended on their recruitment needs. One major engineering company that in the past had been a significant recruiter of school leavers had not been actively involved in link activity for some time as it had been shedding rather than taking on staff. The personnel and training manager explained:

> *'I don't think it is fair to raise the profile of the company in schools when there are no jobs available.'*

Arguments such as this and the many respondents who said that the availability staff time was the key constraint limiting further involvement suggest that participation in education links is cyclical.

However, a significant proportion of involved employers, particularly the more proactive ones, take the opposite view, adopting a long-term perspective, regardless of economic ups and downs. For example, another big engineering company, involved in recent redundancies and not recruiting, felt that such problems should not affect their long-term commitment towards education.

Nevertheless, the general opinion was that the recession has, overall, served to dampen down the ability of employers to get involved, as the following comment from a personnel manager of a large manufacturer illustrates:

> *'Involvement is haphazard at times. It is difficult to convince managers to participate when business is poor, as it is seen as a very peripheral activity.'*

The personnel and training manager of a major insurance company made a similar point:

> *'At a time of reducing overheads and staff numbers and a fiercely competitive environment, links with education take a low priority in terms of allocation of budget or staff time.'*

However, the ability of employers to seek or respond to requests for involvement in education is only one side of the equation. On the other is the demand for such activities from schools, and a

significant proportion of interviewees felt that schools could be more proactive in seeking to build partnerships with business.

Some felt it was a problem of attitude, that schools did not realise what help employers could offer, or that they did not make best use of the offers available, or that it was not a balanced relationship, typified by the following comments:

'I would like to see more requests and ideas from schools. Some still don't see the possibilities and benefits of partnership.'

'The worst thing is if the company puts in effort and it gets an apathetic response from someone in education or, worse, resentment.'

'Some of our involvement with schools has put us off future initiatives. Schools must become more professional and realistic.'

'I would like to see industry education links become more of a two-way process. At the moment, education seems to expect industry to supply everything and get very little back.'

'The main constraint faced by this organisation is the lack of a proactive/co-ordinated approach by schools themselves. The level of interest, involvement and commitment shown by schools in employer/education links, varies substantially within and between schools.'

Others felt that schools and colleges themselves were constrained by the confines of the curriculum and that more could be done to release time for business links activities. For example one director said:

'One way to improve links with education is to alter the school timetable so that more time can be committed to improving the quality and quantity of work experience and to allow the building in of more integrated careers advice.'

And another argued:

'I would like to see the Government plan partnership activity into education policy in a more integrated fashion, so it becomes an imperative rather than a nice add on.'

7.2 Conclusions

The future commitment amongst employers towards education business links seems fairly secure. Few employers are planning to cut back on their current level of involvement and a third are looking to increase it.

However, a significant number of employers are looking to become more business oriented in their approach to partnership activity. One consequence of this is that they may wish to focus their involvement on fewer activities which more closely match their objectives.

The extent of further involvement is limited by broadly the same range of factors facing those who are currently not involved (see Chapter 6).

- First, there are those who see limited value in getting further involved — either because their objectives are already met, or because circumstances have led them to tone down the reasons for involvement.
- Second, there are those that would get involved but are constrained from doing so, through internal factors — particularly the lack of available time.
- Third, there are employers who are constrained by external factors — such as lack of contact from education, a feeling that education does not sufficiently value link activity, or that the National Curriculum constrains education's opportunity for involvement.

8. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to find out why employers become involved in education business link activity and what encourages or discourages their involvement. In this final chapter we pull together the main themes of the research to focus on these questions and to assess the implications for employers, education and the public policy bodies and agencies involved in the promotion of partnership activity.

8.1 Employer involvement

Our research suggests that around a third of organisations[1] have links with education. The most common form of link is the provision of work experience placements, but there is a wide range of other activities in which employers get involved.

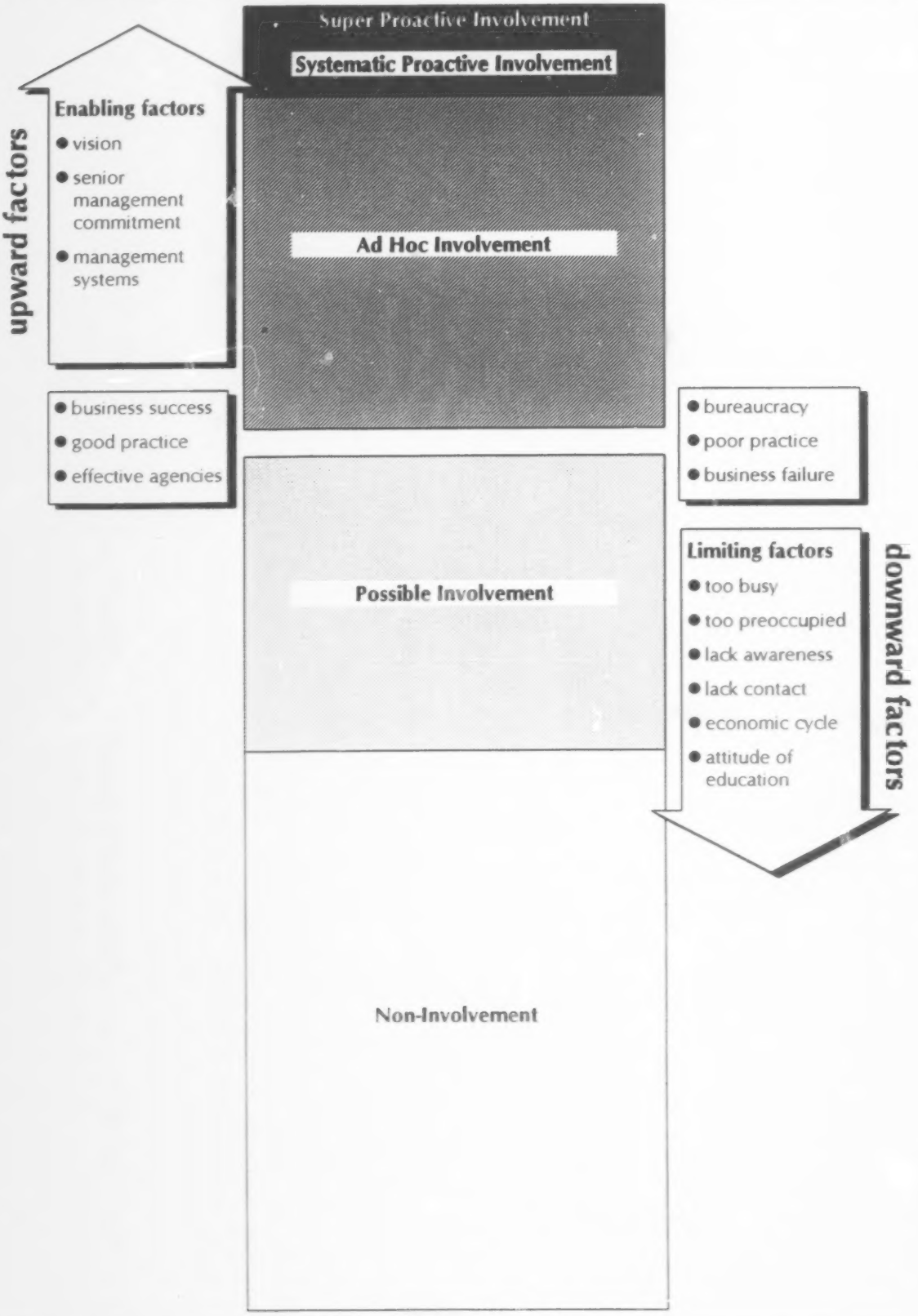
We have distinguished between three groups of involved employers. Most, four out of five, participate in an *ad hoc* fashion, largely at the request of education and/or partnership agencies. They see advantages to being involved — otherwise they would not do it at all — but they are not seen as overwhelming. A minority, around a fifth, are much more enthusiastic and seek more control over what they do and with whom they do it. At the top end of the spectrum are a group, some five per cent of those involved, who we describe as 'super proactive', combining a whole-hearted enthusiasm with a level-headed, business-like approach, setting their own agenda against clearly defined objectives.

Towards the other end of the scale are the majority of employers who are not involved. This group can also be subdivided into those who are interested in participating but are currently constrained in some way, and a majority who are unlikely to be involved in the future.

The spectrum of employer involvement can be described diagramatically (see Figure 8:1). The diagram also summarises the key factors that appear to limit employers' involvement

[1] Employing at least five people.

Figure 8:1 Stages of employer involvement with education



Source: IES, 1995

in the first place and then enable them to be more proactive once they have taken the plunge.

8.2 Factors affecting involvement

The research suggests that there is nothing particularly inherent in the characteristics of an employing organisation that will make it more or less likely to get involved in education business links. Although larger firms on the whole tend to be more involved than others, small firms are represented in our 'super proactive' category. Similarly, involvement does not seem to be particularly sector specific although, by and large, public sector organisations have a greater tendency than those from the private sector to get involved and be more proactive. Service sector organisations are also more likely to be proactive than production companies.

More important than these structural characteristics, appear to be the attitudes of the key personnel involved within the organisation, which in turn are determined by their awareness and experience of partnership activity and the value that they attach to it.

8.2.1 Vision and value

The vast majority of employers believe that education business links are important, but for many they remain a largely peripheral activity.

The key factor influencing whether employers get involved with education business links in the first place, and the extent of their involvement in the future, is the availability of staff time. Although this is partly affected by the economic cycle and the health of the business (see below), it is also influenced by the value attached to the activity.

Of those employers who do not take part in education business links, around a third see no value in it. This is sometimes temporary, as they are currently preoccupied with more pressing business priorities, or a more inherent attitude to do with a failure to see the advantages in the first place.

Those that do take part, generally see the balance of their relationship with education as more 'giving' than 'receiving'. The benefits are more general than specific and more long-term rather than short-term. The more general the motives the more difficult it is to demonstrate the effectiveness of links with education. In these cases, involvement is often more an act of faith supported by a vision.

However, a number of employers are becoming more business focused in their attitude to education, clarifying their objectives and their internal systems for achieving them.

8.2.2 Senior management commitment

The more that senior management of an organisation are convinced of the value of education business links, the more likely it is to become involved and to make their involvement systematic and proactive.

8.2.3 Internal systems

We have seen that employers with education policies and designated managers and budgets are far more involved, and get more out of, partnership activity. It is likely that such internal systems follow on from the value attached to the education business links, rather than the reverse causality. The existence of such systems do appear to be an important demonstration of commitment and a way of integrating partnership activity into the core of the business, therefore making them less peripheral and more sustainable.

8.2.4 Awareness

A significant number of employers were not aware of what they could do or how they could do it. Lack of awareness in these two respects is therefore an impediment to employer involvement.

Some employers complained about the lack of contact they had had from local schools and colleges (although some larger ones felt over-used) or that offers they had made of, for example, teacher or work experience placements had not been taken up. The implication is that lack of contact by schools is a further limiting factor.

8.2.5 Good practice

Poor experiences deter employers from remaining involved. Planning and preparation are key ingredients for successful practice, especially when they lead to the correct matching of students or teachers with what an employer can provide.

Work experience is seen as the number one activity and therefore need to be as successfully managed as possible. It is an area where effective matching of pupil to placement is felt by employers to be particularly important. Similarly teacher placements need to be well planned to retain employer interest. That said, employers still take part in careers events despite feeling that they were relatively unsuccessful.

8.2.6 Attitude of education

A further crucial ingredient for success, according the employers we contacted, is the attitude of education. In some cases,

employers suspected the value attached to education links within the education system, fearing that to some extent schools, colleges and their supporting agencies were number chasing rather than trying to achieve more qualitative goals. This feeling was most often expressed with work experience, teacher placements or school visits that appeared to lack preparation, and/or where insufficient attention had been given to matching the objectives of the participant to the facilities and resources the employer had to offer.

The National Curriculum was perceived by some to act as constraint, restricting the opportunities and scope to exploit the potential for education business links to the full.

8.2.7 Third party agencies

EBPs, TECs and other third party agencies can play an important facilitating role, bringing employers into the partnership net and helping them forge links with education. Employers feel that EBPs currently are less effective at promoting the key elements of good practice and therefore sustaining employer involvement, than they are at helping to forge the initial connections.

The more proactive employers are less dependent on third parties to fulfil their objectives from education business links and many feel that they are relatively 'over-used'. While they are willing to 'play their part' and help in the local management of links, these employers feel that EBP resources would be best focused on bringing new employers into partnership, or extending the participation of those so far only tentatively involved. Other employers, particularly smaller ones, are wary of any bureaucracy that might entangle them as a result of becoming involved with EBPs and TECs.

8.2.8 The economic cycle

Employer involvement appears to be linked to the business cycle to some extent. The recession has had an impact, through limiting the capacity of employers to become involved, and reducing the need for some to use link activity to support recruitment and other human resource issues.

8.3 Implications

8.3.1 For employer involvement

To maintain, if not increase employer interest and involvement, it is important that education links programmes are continually developed and improved. The regular dissemination of best practice and new ideas is obviously a key part of any continuous improvement process. Equally important is the regular

evaluation and monitoring of progress. A notable finding of this research is the lack of evaluation done by employers and the little help they feel they get from EBPs in this respect. It would seem that the development of clear success indicators, and simple evaluation techniques to help employers see the effectiveness of their involvement, would be useful. The CBI in its review of education business links makes a similar point and, through its code of practice, has made a contribution to this process[1], as have others.[2] Most recently, the new study by the Warwick University's Centre for Education and Industry puts forward an outline tool kit to help businesses plan their involvement with education.[3] It will be interesting to track the extent to which such techniques and processes are adopted and the impact they have on employer practice.

While a significant proportion of employers adopt a systematic and proactive approach to education business links, in some cases the impression was that this was more rhetorical than borne out in reality. The implication for employers is that those with active policies in the area of education business links should ensure that the policies are being enacted on the ground. Again the development of clearer guidelines for monitoring and evaluating employer involvement should help this process.

8.3.2 For third party agencies

A minority of employers involved in education business links take a proactive view and see them as an important element of their business agenda. Most adopt an *ad hoc*, responsive approach and are dependent on education or third parties to take the initiative. Without such a stimulus, these employers are far less likely to be involved. This means that in most cases, from the employers' perspective, links are not self-sustaining. There is therefore an important role for third parties to play in both facilitating links and encouraging employers to be more systematic and proactive where appropriate.

This does not mean that all employers welcome the same attention. Some will resist any form of bureaucratic approach, preferring a more spontaneous and serendipitous process. At the other end of the spectrum, those that are adopting a more focused approach will also wish to maximise control over their involvement, and will tend to resist being asked to become involved in activities that do not figure on their own particular agenda.

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1 CBI, 1994, *'Creating a Learning Community'*, a review of education business links.

2 Smithers A and Marsden C, *Assessing the Value*, BP, 1992.

3 Miller A *et al.*, 1995, *Making Education our Business*, ED.

EBPs and other agencies therefore need, themselves, to be more focused and be able to match the services they offer to the particular needs of the employer. Referring back to Figure 8.1, their attention may be targeted most effectively on encouraging employers to cross the barriers between the various groups (*ie* to get those interested in becoming involved to participate and those involved in an *ad hoc* way to be more proactive and systematic) rather than chase the same people to support more and more activities.

Our research also suggests that EBPs could devote more attention to improving the quality of employer involvement by helping them with preparation and evaluation.

If EBPs move in these directions then there will be implications for the way they are evaluated as they concentrate less on the absolute numbers of employers involved and more on the nature and quality of their involvement.

There is still a general feeling among employers that there are too many separate organisations involved and that third party agencies could be benefit from further rationalisation.

8.3.3 For education business link programmes

In terms of particular programmes, we have already noted the importance attached to work experience as the premier education business link activity. Employers see preparation as a key ingredient for success. In particular, employers emphasise the importance of matching students to placements. The evidence from this study is that practice in this regard varies from area to area. More could therefore be done to ensure that students are provided with placements that are appropriate to their interests and studies to a consistently high standard across the country.

On careers events, we found that employers like them in theory but felt them relatively unsuccessful in practice. Consideration should therefore be given to ensuring such activities more fully meet the requirements of both employers and young people.

Teacher placements, by contrast, were not a particularly widespread form of employer participation outside large organisations, but were generally well received by those who did take part. There was a feeling that more could be made of the opportunities available, and again poor planning and preparation were particular irritations to employers.

The message from this research on employer placements in schools is that TECs and EBPs are going to have to work extremely hard to achieve the Government's target of every employer with more than 200 staff releasing one employee a year to spend a week in school. Unless employers see some

value in such an initiative, and as yet most do not, participation will not follow, particularly in the prevailing competitive climate with staff time in most businesses at a premium. To succeed, the benefits to all parties need to be clearly communicated and the value trumpeted by employers who have found the experience beneficial. Perhaps the best way to make a start is to concentrate on those most likely to gain, such as employees who are school or college governors and so already involved and motivated to learn more.

8.3.4 For education

The final thought is that there is a fund of goodwill amongst the business community towards involvement in links with education. However, it is unclear whether education is taking full advantage of this opportunity. Most employers rely on education to set the agenda and will continue to do so. Our conclusion is that the supply of links from the employer side is not a significant constraint to the further development of education business links. The implication is that the level and quality of demand from education may be.

Appendix A: Research Methodology

Postal survey response rate

Table A1:1 shows the pattern of response to the two samples. Once inappropriate returns and non-participants are taken into account, the overall response rate was 47.1 per cent. The EBP sample achieved a 57.2 per cent response and the random sample a 40.1 per cent response. There are two explanations for the differential response rate:

- The random sample has a much higher proportion of employers who are not involved with education links and therefore less inclined to reply — see the non-response analysis below.
- The questionnaires to the EBP sample were sent to named people, while in the random sample they were sent unpersonalised to the managing director. As the research shows, it would probably have been more effective to have addressed the questionnaires to the personnel department, where responsibility for education business links generally seems to lie.

As we have details of the size of the firms in the random sample frame, we can calculate response by size of firm. This shows remarkably little variation. We achieved a 34.6 per cent net response rate from employers with under 25 employees, 37.3 per cent from the 25 to 99 employee bracket; 45.9 per cent from the 100 to 299 employees group and 38.3 per cent from those with 300+ employees.

Table A1:1 Response rate

	Number of forms dispatched	Post Office returns	Net sample	Returns	Gross response rate (%)	Non-participants	Net response	Net response rate (%)
Random sample	1,796	64	1,732	711	41.1	17	694	40.1
EBB sample	1,257	41	1,216	707	58.1	12	695	57.2
Whole sample	3,053	105	2,948	1,418	48.1	29	1,389	47.1

Source: IES survey, 1995

Table A1:2 Achieved response by size of employer

Size by no. of employees	5-24 (%)	25-99 (%)	100-299 (%)	300-999 (%)	1000+ (%)	Total
Random sample	23.7	26.6	23.4	16.5	9.9	668
EBP sample	20.7	20.8	22.3	14.7	21.4	658
Whole sample	22.2	23.8	22.9	15.6	15.6	1,326

Source: IES survey, 1995

The two achieved samples follow broadly similar patterns in terms of size of employer. The main difference between the two is that there is a higher percentage of large employers (with over 1,000 employees) in the EBP sample. As the report will show, such employers have a different, more proactive approach to education business links and so this represents an element of bias to which we must have regard in interpreting the results of the survey.

The two samples also differ on sectoral grounds. The EBP sample has a higher percentage of public sector organisations than the random sample, and a higher proportion of service sector companies and a lower proportion of production companies (see Table A1:3).

The survey results are analysed by employer size and sector. Size is determined by the number of employees. We have split the achieved sample into five roughly equal categories as outlined in Table A1:2. For ease of presentation, where appropriate, some of these size bands have been merged.

Similarly, we have details of respondents' prime business activity and therefore their Industrial Sector. In fact, there appears little differentiation between the sectors, so in most cases the results are discussed merely in terms of the production sector (including agriculture, energy and water, manufacturing and construction, *ie* SIC 0 to 5) and the service sector (including distribution, hotels and catering, transport, business services and other services, *ie* SIC 6 to 9).

Although we sought responses on an establishment basis, (to cover the particular workplace to which the survey was addressed), in some cases our respondents chose to reply on a

Table A1:3 Achieved response by sector

	Public sector (%)	Private sector (%)	Production sector (%)	Service sector (%)	N =
Random sample	2.2	97.6	56.0	44.0	687
EBP sample	15.6	84.4	33.6	66.4	688
Whole sample	9.0	90.9	44.8	55.2	1,375

Source: IES survey, 1995

Table A1:4 Main reason for not responding

Reason	%
Not relevant	33.7
No time, too busy etc.	23.3
Passed questionnaire on	16.6
No recollection of questionnaire	11.4
Policy of not completing questionnaires	10.5
Other	4.6
N = 104	

Source: IES survey, 1995

multi-site basis. Most of these are included in the 1,000 employee plus category.

(A copy of the questionnaire is set out at the end of this Appendix.)

Non-respondents

To see if we had encountered any bias in the response from the random sample, we contacted a random sample of people who did not send back their questionnaire. We collected useful information from 104 non-respondents. The main reasons given for not completing the questionnaire are summarised in Table A1:4.

Around a third of the non-respondents thought the questionnaire irrelevant to their operation and another quarter said that they were too busy or that they did not have any staff or time to fill it in. Another quarter either said that they did not recall the questionnaire or said that they had passed it on either to some-one within the site or to a head or divisional office. As the organisations we spoke to got larger it became more and more difficult to trace exactly where our questionnaires ended up. Around a tenth of the respondents said that they had a policy of not completing questionnaires.

We also asked whether the organisations had any links with education (using the same definition as on the main questionnaire). A tenth of the people we spoke did not know (see Table A1:5). Of the rest, 47.1 per cent said that they did not get involved and 42.3 per cent said that they did — this is in line with other surveys[1]. This compares markedly with the response to the random sample, where we found just over 72.1 per cent involved in links in some way, and particularly with the sample

[1] For instance, IFF (1994), *Skill Needs In Britain*.

Table A1:5 Non-respondents' participation in education business links

	Small (u.100) (%)	Large (100+) (%)	Production sector (%)	Service sector (%)	All
Do get involved	23.1	61.5	43.1	41.5	42.3
Do not get involved	69.2	25.0	47.1	47.2	47.1
Don't know	7.7	13.5	9.8	11.3	10.6
N =	*52*	*52*	*51*	*53*	*104*

Source: IES survey, 1995

as a whole — including those drawn from EBP databases — where 85 per cent had links.

The table also provides data by broad employer size and sector. It shows that there was little variation by sector, but a strong relationship with size of employer. Only around 23.1 per cent of employers with under 100 employees said they had links with education, compared with over 60 per cent of those with 100 employees of more.

This is strong evidence to suggest that our sample is biased towards those employers with links to education. Although we have taken this into account when calculating the overall proportion of employers involved in education business links, we have not done so elsewhere. This caveat should therefore be taken into account when interpreting the other results.

Employers' Views of Education Business Links

Please complete this questionnaire on behalf of your local workplace or establishment

Section 1. Introduction

1.1 Do you think that there should be links between education and employers (involving two-way exchanges of people, resources and information)? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

1.2 Has your organisation had any links with education over the past two years? (By 'links' we include things like providing work experience or teachers placements, attending careers events, hosting school visits *etc.*) *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

If YES or Don't know, please go to Question 2.1.
If NO, please answer the questions on the rest of this page and go to Question 7.1

1.3 What are the main reasons why you have not made any links with education over the past two years? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

a) You have no time to get involved in such activities ☐
b) You have no personal interest in getting involved in such activities ☐
c) You see no value for your organisation in getting involved in such activities ☐
d) You would like to get involved in such activities but do not know how to go about it ☐
e) You did not realise you could get involved in such activities ☐

1.4 Which of these reasons is the most important? *(Please enter a letter from a to e)* ☐

1.5 Would you be interested in becoming involved with education at some point in the future? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

1.6 What could be done, if anything, to encourage your involvement with education? *(Please specify)*

.....

.....

Section 2. Nature of links

2.1 Has your organisation been involved in any of the following education/business link activities within the last year? If YES, please indicate the extent of involvement. *(Please tick one box on each line)*

	Yes	If yes, approx. volume	No	Don't know
a) Providing work experience placements	☐	..... places a year	☐	☐
b) Mentoring with students	☐	..... students a year	☐	☐
c) Providing teacher placements	☐	..... places a year	☐	☐
d) Attending careers events	☐	..... events a year	☐	☐
e) School visits to your premises	☐	..... visits a year	☐	☐
f) Employer placements in school	☐	..... places a year	☐	☐
g) Taking part in curriculum projects	☐	..... projects a year	☐	☐
h) Undertaking mock interviews	☐	..... times a year	☐	☐
i) Offering work shadowing opportunities	☐	..... places a year	☐	☐
j) Other (please specify)	☐	..... times a year	☐	☐

.....

2.2 Which three of these activities do you consider to be the most valuable to your organisation? *(Please write in three letters from a to j)*

☐☐☐

2.3 With which educational institution(s) does your organisation have links? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

		Number, if known
a) Higher education (*eg* universities)	☐	.....
b) Further education college(s)	☐	.....
c) Secondary school(s)	☐	.....
d) Primary school(s)	☐	.....
e) Special school(s)	☐	.....
f) GM school(s)	☐	.....
g) Independent school(s)	☐	.....
h) City Technology College(s)	☐	.....

2.4 Are links with one of the these educational institutions more important than with others? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

2.5 If YES, which one? (*Please enter a letter from a to h)*

☐

2.6 Thinking about the three most valuable forms of links identified in question 2.2, how would you rate their success? *(Please indicate the appropriate letter from 2.2 and then circle a number from 1 to 5, ranging from 1 = very successful to 5 = very unsuccessful)*

Letter	Very successful				Very unsuccessful
.....	1	2	3	4	5
.....	1	2	3	4	5
.....	1	2	3	4	5

2.7 Why do you get involved in links with education? *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 5 (ranging from 1 = complete agreement to 5 = complete disagreement)*

	Complete agreement				Complete disagreement
Links with education are important because:					
a) they offer a chance to influence young people and their attitudes to work	1	2	3	4	5
b) they are a way to put something back into the local community	1	2	3	4	5
c) education can benefit from your management expertise	1	2	3	4	5
d) they provide worthwhile opportunities for management development	1	2	3	4	5
e) they allow you to build up good recruitment channels	1	2	3	4	5
f) they enable you to show young people what interesting careers are available in your sector	1	2	3	4	5
g) they are a soft form of marketing and give you a good profile	1	2	3	4	5
h) they help you understand changes in qualifications and what they mean	1	2	3	4	5
i) you can pick up on the latest teaching and learning techniques	1	2	3	4	5
j) you can help young people learn specific work-related skills	1	2	3	4	5
k) you can purchase training or other services	1	2	3	4	5
l) links with education helps raise the economic and industrial understanding of students	1	2	3	4	5
m) other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
.....					

Section 3. Process

3.1 Which of the following best describes your overall stance towards education business links? *(Please tick one box)*

Responsive — you wait to be contacted by education ☐ 1

Proactive — you seek out the links you want ☐ 2

Based on chance — it depends on who meets whom and when ☐ 3

3.2 Does your organisation have a formal policy towards links with education? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

3.3 Is one person responsible for managing or co-ordinating links with education at your workplace *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

3.4 If YES, please give their job title *(Please write in)*

.....

3.5 Does your organisation have a formal budget for links with education? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

3.6 In your links with education, what are the main resources that you provide? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

Staff time ☐

Use of premises ☐

Use of equipment ☐

Donations of equipment ☐

Cash ☐

3.7 Do you quantify the resources you provide? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

3.8 If YES, please estimate how much you provide in terms of staff time (hours) and/or donations of cash or equipment (£) for 1994.

Staff time ..... (hours) Donations £ .....

3.9 Do you make a formal assessment of the links you have with education?
(Please tick one box)

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

3.10 Have you heard of any of the following links between education and employers?
(Please tick one box for each line)

	Yes	No
Science and Technology Regional Organisation (SaTRO)	☐	☐
Compact	☐	☐
Education Business Partnership (EBP)	☐	☐
Project Trident	☐	☐
Neighbourhood Engineers	☐	☐
School Curriculum Industry Partnership (SCIP)	☐	☐
Education Strategic Forum	☐	☐
Teacher Placement Service	☐	☐
Training and Enterprise Council (TEC)	☐	☐
Young Enterprise	☐	☐

Section 4. Education Business Partnerships

4.1 Do you have any links with an Education Business Partnership? (By 'you' we mean either yourself or anyone representing your establishment) *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

If NO, please go to Section 5

4.2 If yes, what form does the link take? *(Please tick as many boxes as apply)*

You sit on the executive board or council ☐

You are involved in sub-committees ☐

You have become a 'member' or official 'partner' ☐

Your name is on their database ☐

You receive a newsletter ☐

You take part in activities they organise ☐

4.3 To what extent do you think that your local EBP provides an effective service in any of the following areas? *(Please circle a number against each statement, ranging from 1 = very effective to 5 = completely ineffective)*

The EBP has helped you to:	Very effective				Completely ineffective
get involved in link activities	1	2	3	4	5
get in touch with schools and colleges	1	2	3	4	5
prepare for your involvement with schools and colleges	1	2	3	4	5
evaluate the link activities in which you have been involved	1	2	3	4	5
publicise the successful activities in which you have been involved	1	2	3	4	5

Section 5. Teacher placements

Please answer the questions in this section if you provide placements for teachers (as indicated by your answer to Question 2.1). If you do not provide any placements please go on to Section 6.

5.1 What are the main reasons why you provide placements to teachers? *(Please write in)*

.....

.....

.....

5.2 What benefits accrue to your organisation from providing placements for teachers? *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements by circling a number from 1 to 5 (ranging from 1 = complete agreement to 5 = complete disagreement)*

	Complete agreement				Complete disagreement
You gain a greater understanding of how education works	1	2	3	4	5
You improve your contacts with local schools and colleges	1	2	3	4	5
It provides you with staff development opportunities	1	2	3	4	5
You benefit from an appraisal of your systems from a new perspective	1	2	3	4	5
Other *(please specify)*	1	2	3	4	5

Section 6. The future

6.1 Do you see yourself becoming more or less involved in links with education in the future (*ie* over the next two years)? *(Please tick one box)*

More involved in a wider range of links	☐ 1
More involved but in a narrower range of links	☐ 2
About the same as now	☐ 3
Less involved than now	☐ 4

6.2 Would any of the following factors be likely to influence your involvement with education? (*Please indicate the likelihood of influence, by ticking the appropriate box on each line)*

	Definitely	Possibly	Unlikely
The amount of financial resource you have available	☐	☐	☐
The amount of staff resource you have available	☐	☐	☐
Clearly identified business benefits	☐	☐	☐
Better systems to make it easier to link with education	☐	☐	☐
Other *(please specify)*	☐	☐	☐

Section 7. Further information

7.1 What is your main business activity, *eg* what are your main products or services? *(Please write in)*

.....

7.2 Is your organisation part of the public sector (*ie* a central or local government department agency or trust)? *(Please tick one box)*

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2 Don't know ☐ 3

7.3 Approximately how many are currently employed in your organisation? *(Please include full-time and part-time employees)*

.....

7.4 Respondent details

Please indicate the postcode of your workplace .....

7.5 Do you have any further comments regarding your involvement with education? *(Please write in)*

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

We hope to pursue the issues covered in the survey in greater depth with a small number of employers. Would you or a colleague be willing to spare a small amount of time (around 45 minutes) for a confidential discussion with a member of our research team?

Yes ☐ 1 No ☐ 2

If YES, please provide your name, job title and telephone number

.....

.....

Thank you very much indeed for participating in this survey. Please return the questionnaire in the reply-paid envelope or to IES at the Freepost address below.

All questionnaires will be treated in confidence.

If you have any queries about the study, please contact Kate Hyndley or Jim Hillage at the address below.

Institute for Employment Studies, Freepost, Mantell Building, University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton BN1 1ZX Tel: (0273) 686751 Fax: (0273) 690430

Appendix B: Commentary Programme List

1. Issues raised by the DE Group, Problems and Pressures affecting Firms

2. Shortages of Electrical Engineers Output-Employment/Unemployment Relationships: a Company Level View
   The Employment of Accountants
   Women's Employment: a Bibliography

3. The Employment of Accountants — an Outline of the IMS/EEF Productivity Study Case Study of the Effects of Legislation in the Off-shore Oil Construction Sector.
   Two IMS Manpower Survey Occupational Analyses Updated: Electrical Engineers*, Secretaries and Typists in Greater London

4. Changing Employment/Output Relationships (full version and an outline of findings)

5. Report of the IMS Survey of Emigration of Electrical Engineers (full version and summary version)

6. Changes in the Output/Employment Relationship since the middle of 1978.
   Trends in Occupation 1974-78
   Absence*
   Employers' Attitudes to the Provision of Advance Part-time and Short Courses in Technology*

7. Follow-up Study on Firms' Output and Employment Plans, Potential for Worksharing in Selected UK Organisations*
   Future Manpower Requirements in the UK Carpet Industry*
   The Determinants of Doctors' Career Decisions*
   Graduates' Early Work Experience*

8. Mobility in the Labour Market

9. Case Studies in Labour Mobility
   The Absence Workshop — a Summary*

10. Sick Pay and Absence

11. Alleviating Skill Shortages: the Contributions of Internal Company Manpower Utilisation and Publicly-funded Training

12. Redundancy Payments Survey: Findings on the Feasibility Study Performance and Productivity in Engineering
The Absence Workshop: Results of the 1979 Absence Survey*

13. Redundancy Provisions (summary findings)
Redundancy Provisions (statistical tables)

14. Recruitment and Training in the Recession

15. Labour Productivity and the Current Recession

16. The Layard Scheme: an Attitudinal Approach
YWS: a Preliminary Assessment

17. Occupational Pensions as a Constraint to Mobility
Apprentice Training Support*
The Changing Face of Sick Pay: Self-certification*
Housing Constraints in a Growing Labour Market*

18. Jobsharing
Employment of Disabled Persons

19. YTS Survey

20. Growing Firms

21. YTS Follow-up Survey

22. YTS Final Report

23. Gatwick Airport and the Labour Market*
Selection Criteria: Matching Young People to Jobs in the 1980s
IMS Research into the Determinants of Wastage*
The Sponsorship of Engineering Graduates in the UK*
The Avon Labour Market for Computing Skills*
Skilled Manpower in Construction

24. Early Retirement

25. New Technology and Employment in the Financial Services Sector: Past Impact and Future Prospects

26. Recruitment, Training and New Technology

27. Methods of Measuring Skill Shortages: Interim Report

28. Methods of Measuring Skill Shortages: Final Report

29. Retraining for Electronics*
Policy and Practice in Career Management*
Redundancy in the 1980s

30. New Forms of Work Organisation

31. Temporary Working in Britain: Its Growth and Changing Rationales*

32. Flexibility in Firms

33. Access to Training and Jobs

34. Employers' Attitudes to the Long Term Unemployed

35. Patterns of Retirement

36. Employers' Attitudes to NAFE Providers

37. Employment Structures in Tourism and Leisure

38. Dividing Jobs: Employers' Attitudes to Job-sharing and Job-splitting

39. Relocation and Recruitment Difficulties of Employers in the South East

40. Employer Involvement in Adult Training Initiatives

41. Flexibility & Skill in Manufacturing Establishments

42. Corporate Employment Policies for Europe

43. Retaining Women Employees: Measures to Counteract Labour Shortage

44. The Employment and Utilisation of Older Workers

45. Regional Variation in the Development of Youth Training

46. Recruitment Procedures and Job Search Behaviour

47. Pay Pressures in the Private Sector: Managerial Strategies

48. Literacy and Less Skilled Jobs

49. Foreign Language Needs of Business

50. Re-deployment of ex-Service Staff

51. Careers Service

52. Barriers to Returning to Work

53. Young Workers

54. Employing Disabled Personnel

55. Jobsearch

56. Employer Responses to Training and Enterprise Council Provision

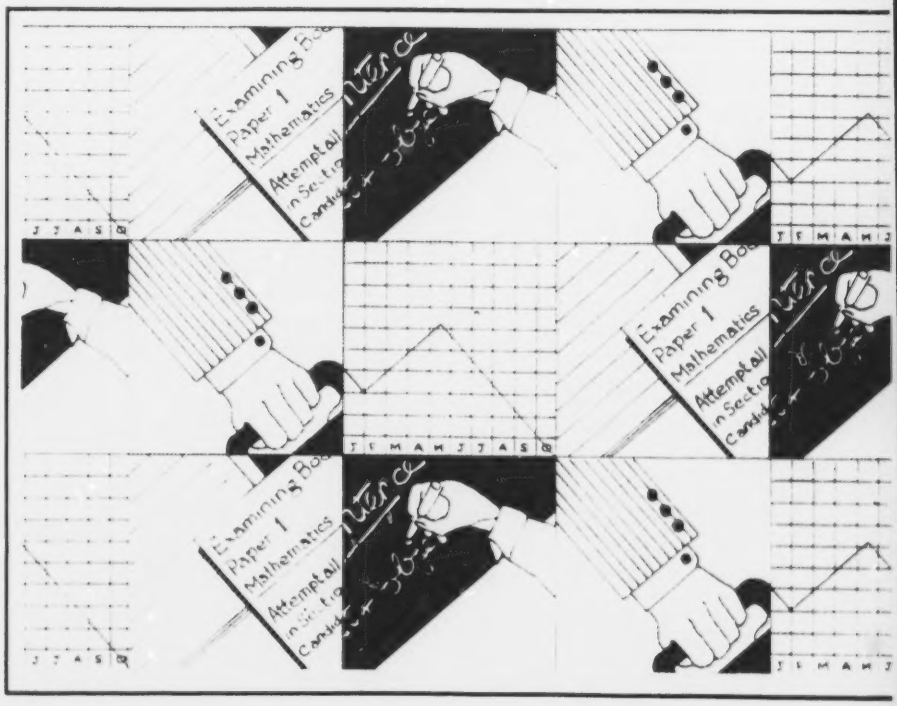
57. Employers' Policies and Attitudes Towards Check-off

* These reports were derived from Institute research conducted outside the Commentary remit.

EMPLOYERS' VIEWS OF EDUCATION BUSINESS LINKS
J Hillage, K Hyndley, G Pike
Report 283, 1995.
ISBN 1-85184-209-8.

The development of links between education and business are an important part of the government's drive to improve skill levels and the nation's competitiveness. Links cover a diverse pattern of activities from attending the occasional careers evening through providing work experience placements, to providing an input to a major segment of the curriculum.

This report, commissioned by the Employment Department, looks at employers' views of education business links. It examines why and how employers get involved with education and what sort of activities they prefer. It draws out implications for employers, education links agencies and policy bodies, and concludes that the supply of links from the employer side is not a significant constraint in developing a higher level of activity.



The Institute for Employment Studies
Mantell Building
University of Sussex
Brighton BN1 9RF
UK

Tel. +44 (0) 1273 686751
Fax +44 (0) 1273 690430

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